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A

BOOK FOR THE SABBATH;

IN

THREE PARTS.

I.

ORIGIN, DESIGN, AND OBLIGATION OF THE SABBATH;

II.

PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT OF THE SABBATH;

III.

DEVOTIONAL EXERCISES FOR THE SABBATH.

BY

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"The Sabbath was made for man."

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PREFACE.

This work is divided into three parts. In the first, the author has aimed to present the broad and deep Scriptural foundations on which the institution of the Sabbath rests. In the second part, he has dwelt at length on the practical improvement of the day; showing how it may be sanctified, and in what ways it is commonly profaned. The third part embraces a series of meditations and prayers—the number answering to the number of Sabbaths in the year—and prepared, with a view to assist the Christian in his private devotions. Some of these are appropriate especially to the Sabbath; some respect the sacrament; others are intended to apply to the seasons of the year; many of them are suited to persons in affliction; and all, it is hoped, are such, as the pious soul will love to think upon in retirement.

Although this volume is entitled "A book for the Sabbath," yet as the third part is purely devotional, and applies to the secular as well as to the sacred part of the week, it may prove to some, a useful manual in the religious exercises of the family and the closet.

It is needless to dwell on the importance of the subject. The convictions of the entire christian community are in

favor of a more strict observance of the Lord's day. Let the reform begin at the house of God. Let the outer and the inner court of the temple be first purified. A principal design of the author is, to urge upon the Church a conscientious discharge of Sabbath obligations; believing that when *their* example is right, this blessed day, if not rescued entirely from profanation, will at least exert its legitimate influence; and will serve to check the inundation of vice, which, rapidly augmenting, threatens to sweep away even this bulwark of salvation.

Hudson, N. Y. Oct. 1840.

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PART I.

ORIGIN, DESIGN AND OBLIGATION OF THE SABBATH.

CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN OF THE SABBATH.

The Sabbath began at the close of the primeval creation. This is the testimony of Moses. "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work, which God created and made."

The patriarch tells us, in this simple and beautiful language, when and why the Sabbath was instituted. The sceptic may sneer at the idea of the omnipotent God exerting himself to create the world by *successive* acts of self-moving power, instead of a simple volition, whereby it should at once, in all its varied grandeur, spring into existence. But in this, as in all the other great doings of Jehovah, there is a design; which is to be traced in its practical bearings on our race, whose *moral* improvement, no less than their temporal convenience was before the divine mind, when he sketched the plan and laid the foundations of the earth.

Says one, "we are not to think but that God could have made the world in an instant. But he did it in six days

that his wisdom, power and goodness might appear to us, and be meditated on by us the more distinctly ; and that he might set us an example of working six days and resting the seventh. It is therefore made the reason of the fourth commandment. So much would the Sabbath conduce to the keeping up of religion in the world, that God had an eye to it in the timing of his creation."

Nor are we to suppose that the day of rest, following upon the six days of creative power, was in order to recruit the exhausted energies of Jehovah. For the Creator " fainteth not, neither is weary." It had reference, we presume, principally to the moral impression upon man, which subsequent enactments respecting the Sabbath were designed to corroborate and enforce. " The eternal God, though infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself, yet took a satisfaction in the work of his own hands. He did not rest as one weary, but as one well pleased with the instances of his own goodness, and the manifestations of his own glory."

Having advanced thus much, with a view to break the force of an infidel objection sometimes thrown out against this part of the Pentateuch, we may present some other considerations bearing on the origin of the Sabbath.

Until the close of the sixth day everything in the forming world was in commotion. Obedient to the Creator's will, the various portions were seeking their affinities, and the numerous departments of this wondrous sphere were hastening to a completion. The atmosphere was throwing its drapery around the globe, to afford a beautiful medium for the sun-light, which was falling upon it in richest splendor. The waters hitherto diffused were gathering together, and the earth was rising into view in all its diversified forms of grandeur. The chaotic mass had already put on the appearance of order, and each succeeding day disclosed new

wonders under the invisible hand that was at work to elicit and arrange them. The sixth day was ended; and now all seemed to be at rest. Every part had found its kindred portion. The classification was complete. The work was one grand whole, and as perfect as God could make it. There was no more rushing to and fro. The elements were hushed. It was nature in her infantile repose. The outspread beauties of creation seemed to sleep in calm tranquility.

How natural then that, at this juncture, God should pronounce his public benediction, upon the new creation! But equally appropriate was it for him to appoint a day of rest, and to call the intelligent universe to consider his power and his goodness. In this primeval Sabbath, the angelic choirs united in celebrating the praises of God. "The morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy." No temple erected by human skill was needed, where the whole earth was a vast temple, whose builder was God, to whom—as the Supreme Divinity—every thing in heaven and in earth did homage.

In this primitive rest we see also a type of heaven. More glorious still that scene, where the ransomed of the Lord, after the toil and trials of their earthly lot, shall meet to enjoy the "rest which remaineth," and to celebrate in their songs and hallelujahs the still greater work of redemption. If the first Sabbath which dawned upon the young creation was blissful, and spoke of the power and the wisdom and the goodness of the Creator; what will be that everlasting Sabbath which is to be enjoyed without the possibility of sin to blight its immortal scenery; and where, instead of the devotions of a single pair, there will be ten thousand times ten thousand tongues, making music such as God will delight to hear—the music of the soul—in

which the beginning and end of their song will be, "Glory to God in the highest;" "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and glory and blessing."

CHAPTER II.

PERPETUITY OF THE SABBATH.

Was this primeval *rest* continued after the fall, and is a Sabbath obligatory on accountable man through every successive generation?

There is some reason to believe that a day of rest and of special religious services was observed by the patriarchs, from the creation to the period when the Lord, at Mount Sinai, repeated and formally confirmed the obligations of the Sabbath. "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it." For what purpose was the day sanctified, if God did not intend his new created subjects to observe it religiously? Why was a peculiar sacredness attached to it, if no moral obligation to consecrate it to purposes of divine worship was intended?

A knowledge of this institution seems to have been recognized in the conduct of Noah in sending out the dove. Says an able commentator, "Noah sent forth the dove after *seven* days, and probably the first sending her out was seven days after the sending forth of the raven, which intimates, that it was done on the Sabbath day, which it should seem Noah religiously observed in the ark." It is believed by many that Abraham also and his posterity preserved the memory of the creation, and kept the Sabbath according to the original design.

It is however a point of small practical importance, whether, in the interval between Adam and Moses, the Sabbath was statedly observed or not; especially as its re-enactment and solemn obligations have been formally announced at Mount Sinai. The language of the Great Lawgiver is, "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work: but the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it."

This command seems to be a renewal and confirmation of the original institution; and implies that a very general neglect at least had been practised in relation to it. It was hence placed by Jehovah in the very centre of the sacred code; and was not only enjoined as a general precept, but specific points were noted in order to secure its faithful observance. In arguing for the perpetuity of the Sabbath, therefore, we have the advantage of the original institution at the creation, and also its central incorporation with the decalogue which was designed to be obligatory as a code of morals on all succeeding generations.

We suppose that, when at the complétion of the creation, the Almighty sanctified the seventh day, it must have been with a view to moral impressions on the mind of man. It could not surely have been from any necessity for rest or for recreation on the part of God. If this be so; if the Creator, foreseeing the vast importance of such a day to the moral interests of our race, designed it as a means of keeping alive a sense of religion in the world, it is clear

that the whole race, through every successive generation, should admit and feel its obligation.

The very fact, that at the fountain-head of our existence, under the cloudless skies of a new and unsullied creation, this great institution was enacted, is proof positive that God designed it not for Adam alone; nor for that generation alone which was nearest to him; no, nor for the Jews alone—who were but a modicum of the entire race—but for *all* who should descend from this progenitor of mankind.

If it were important for Adam, ere yet his soul was stained with guilt, to pause even in his innocent pursuits, and pay the homage of an entire day of devotion every week to God, celebrating his wisdom, power and goodness, as exhibited in the wonders of creation; surely it is no less important to every descendant of Adam—cursed with the consequences of the fall, absorbed in carnal things and forgetful of his Maker—to lift his low thoughts at least *as* often in the contemplation of his obligations to his God. What is done at the fountain-head is designed to affect the streams in their remotest meanderings. Hence we infer the perpetual obligation of the Sabbath.

This argument for the perpetuity of the Sabbath is fortified and confirmed by the solemn renewal and enactment of the same institution in the decalogue. The ten commandments are designed to be of perpetual obligation. This is not denied, nor even doubted in relation to those which are strictly *moral;* but the fourth commandment has been excepted to as a *positive* rather than a *moral* precept; and hence some writers have argued for its observance on the ground of expediency rather than of perpetual moral obligation.*

Now although this treatise is designed to be practical and

* Dr. Paley.

devotional rather than argumentative, the writer will nevertheless take the liberty to place before the reader some additional scriptural arguments against a position so fallacious as well as injurious.

By what authority have we a right to expunge the fourth commandment from the decalogue, whilst we admit the perpetual binding obligation of the other nine? Up to the time of the Savior's advent this command was, by the whole Jewish nation, recognized as of equal force with the rest. They did not dream of its inferior claims. Its position in the decalogue—in the very centre of that divinely inspired code—shows in what estimation it was held by its great author. By what authority then, we again ask, is this solemn precept torn from its position, or pronounced less obligatory than the other nine?

The advocates of expediency have fallen into this error, by confounding the Jewish *ceremonial* with the great *moral* law; and because, at the coming of Christ, the former with its burdensome rites was done away, they have argued, that along with their abolition, the Sabbath ceased to be obligatory.

Let us consider this position. Had the Almighty designed that the Sabbath should fall, with the extinction of the Jewish rites, why was it placed among the ten commandments and not along with the strictly ceremonial law? "If," says a writer, "it was not equally obligatory with the other nine, why was it engraved by the same divine hand and on the same enduring tables." It is manifestly impugning the divine wisdom, to give this commandment a place—and a conspicuous one—in the code which was to be of binding obligation throughout all generations, and then to class it with the ceremonial or Levitical laws which were intended to be national and typical, and which were in their very nature transitory.

But the Sabbath, we maintain, was not a *mere positive* institution. The fourth commandment, like all the other precepts of the decalogue, had a strong *moral* import. The design of it was to bring God into view as the great Creator of the universe. It calls the attention away from secular to sacred pursuits, and breaks up those thoughts of vanity, which for six days of the week, bind with oppressive power to this earthly clod the immortal mind of man. Is there nothing of a moral and sacred import in a commandment which looks to such an end? Bears it with more force upon *one* generation than upon another; or is the Gentile less under these high moral obligations than the Jew? Says Dr. Dwight, "It was no more necessary to a Jew than to any other person to commemorate the perfections of God displayed in the works of creation; it was no more necessary to a Jew to obtain holiness or to increase it; it is no more necessary to a Jew to seek or to obtain salvation. Whatever makes either of these things interesting to a Jew in any degree, makes them in the same degree interesting to any other man. The nature of the command, therefore, teaches us plainly as the nature of a command can teach, that it is of universal application to mankind. *It has, then, this great criterion of a moral precept, viz. universality of application.*"

To confirm these views we have our Savior's strong declaration, that he came "not to destroy the law,"—meaning the moral law—"but to fulfil." He placed the duties which it inculcated in a light calculated to convince the self-justifying Pharisee of his deficiency. All that Christ said in vindication of his own conduct and that of his disciples respecting the Sabbath day, went on the supposition that the *spirit* of the fourth commandment may be violated whilst there is an over-scrupulous exactness as to some

little things which pertained to the ceremonial part of its observance. He by no means intended, as some have said, to break the moral force, or to deny the perpetuity of this precept. The works of love and mercy which he performed on the Sabbath were rather an attestation to its heavenly design.

Nor can any thing be legitimately drawn from the apostolical writings to favor the idea, that the obligations of the weekly Sabbath were ever set aside. Because the Jewish converts were inclined to impose upon the Gentiles some of their ceremonies—retaining, as we may suppose, even after conversion, a strong prejudice in their favor—the apostles, especially Paul, laid down the rules of gospel liberty; declaring, that no man had a right to judge his brethren, "in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of Sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come."

Now when we consider, that among the Jews there were other Sabbaths besides the weekly Sabbath, the form of expression, "*Sabbath days*," in the above quotation, will appear manifestly to have had reference not to the *weekly* but to some of the strictly ceremonial Sabbaths; especially as we find them named along with "meat, drink, and the new moon."

But even had the apostle referred to the seventh day, it would not prove the abrogation of the Sabbath, admitting as we must, that since the resurrection of our Lord, the Sabbath has been changed from the seventh to the first day. In this case, it would be unreasonable for the Jewish convert to insist that both days should be acknowledged obligatory. Hence the apostle argues in favor of Christian liberty.

We say then, that the original institution of a weekly Sabbath coeval with creation, and its solemn renewal and confirmation at Mount Sinai—its incorporation with the deca-

logue, designed to be of perpetual obligation—its moral import, equally applicable to all generations,—stamp this day of rest as of permanent obligation; and impious must be that hand, which with unholy temerity attempts to abridge its sanctions or to weaken its power over the conscience.

Throughout all time must it continue to invite the weary to rest, and to call the thoughtless heart to the consideration of its destiny. As years roll on, this day of "sacred, high delight," will shine with increasing lustre, and be hailed by more joyful acclamations, as the saints become more numerous, and the songs of Zion swell in volume and sweeten in harmony, until at length, that great Sabbath of the world shall break upon our gladdened eyes, when every day will be as this day, and when even on the secular implements of man will be inscribed "holiness to the Lord."

CHAPTER III.

CHANGE OF THE SABBATH FROM THE SEVENTH TO THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK.

An institution like that of the Sabbath can be perpetuated, whilst the precise period of the week in which it is to be observed may, for good and sufficient reasons, be changed.

The same authority which fixed the original Sabbath is adequate to move it forward one day, with a view to embrace in its associations events as signal and even more important than the creation of the world.

The Almighty has made changes analogous somewhat to this, in which, whilst the import of the institution remains the same, the circumstances of time and external formality

have been altered. For example, the initiatory rite into the visible church enjoined, in the first instance, upon Abraham was, the apostle expressly declares, a "seal of the righteousness of faith." Its import was similar to that of baptism under the new covenant. The latter, by superceding the former, perpetuated in a sense the same institution. Although, in the external formality, there was a change, yet neither the import, nor the extent of its application, was varied materially by this change of the external sign. The time also when the one seal was to be administered in the case of infants was on the eighth day; whereas, in the administration of baptism, this precise point of time is not considered important. So also we suppose that in the change from the seventh to the first day, there is not an abrogation of the Sabbath, but a mere circumstantial change as to the time when it is to be observed. If the seventh day commemorated the completion of the creation, the first day, including this event, adds in its holy associations, a still more glorious event, the closing triumphs of the work of redemption.

This change, it is believed, took place when our Savior rose from the dead. The resurrection, the evangelists tell us, was on the first day of the week. From this period onward, we find the Jewish superceded by the Christian Sabbath. Without any explicit command, so far as appears in the New Testament, the disciples by common consent invariably held this day as consecrated to their Lord. For such an important change, we feel confident they must have had the authority of their Divine Master. His example subsequent to his resurrection seems to favor this idea, and to justify the observance of the Sabbath on the first day of the week; for it was on this day that he appeared to his disciples, and in the next interview, he selected the same day on which to commune with and to bless them.

In relation to the rites practised by the church in the first century, Dr. Mosheim observes, "All Christians were unanimous in setting apart the first day of the week, on which the triumphant Savior arose from the dead, for the solemn celebration of public worship. This pious custom, which was derived from the example of the church of Jerusalem, was founded upon the express appointment of the apostles, who consecrated that day to the same sacred purpose, and was observed universally throughout all the Christian churches, as appears from the united testimony of the most credible writers. The seventh day of the week was also observed as a festival, *not by the Christians in general*, but by such churches only as were principally composed of Jewish converts, nor did the other Christians censure this custom as criminal and unlawful." In a note on this subject, the same author says, "It is in vain that many learned men have labored to prove, that in *all* the primitive churches both the first and last day of the week were observed as festivals. The churches of Bithynia, of which Pliny speaks, in his letter to Trajan, *had only one stated day*, for the celebration of public worship; and that was undoubtedly the *first* day of the week, or what we call *the Lord's day*."

If additional testimony, as to the change of the day be needed, the reader may be referred to an able article on this subject in Calmet's Dictionary. "The change of the day," says that author, "is rather to be gathered from the practice of the Christian church than as clearly enjoined in the New Testament. It appears that believers came together on this day to break bread; that collections for the poor were then made, and put into the general treasury of the church (as we understand 1 Cor. 16: 2); that on this day exhortations and discourses were made to the people;

and in short, we have the various parts of public worship noted as being performed on this day. It will follow, that we may safely imitate those examples which the apostles and primitive Christians have left us. The resurrection Sabbath commemorates an event in which all Christians throughout the world are interested, and for which no equal mode of commemoration can be devised. We have then good example and strong propriety in behalf of our observation of the Lord's day as a religious festival, though not as a Jewish Sabbath; and the same principles influenced the Christians of early ages."

"We are informed by Eusebius, that from the beginning the Christians assembled on the first day of the week, called by them the Lord's day, for the purposes of religious worship, to read the Scriptures, to preach, and to celebrate the Lord's supper; and Justin Martyr observes, 'That, on the Lord's day, all Christians in the city or country meet together, because *that* is the day of our Lord's resurrection, and then we read the writings of the apostles and prophets; this being done, the president makes an oration to the assembly, to exhort them to imitate and to practice the things they have heard; then we all join in prayer, and after that we celebrate the sacrament. Then they who are able and willing, give what they think proper; and what is collected is laid up in the hands of the president, who distributes it to orphans and widows, and other necessitous Christians, as their wants require.' See 1 Cor. 16: 20. A very honorable conduct and worship! Would to God it were more prevalent among us; with the spirit and piety of primitive Christianity!"

"John says (Rev. 1: 10), 'I was in the spirit on the Lord's day;' so called, doubtless, to preserve the remembrance of his resurrection, which was the completion of our redemp-

tion. Barnabas, in his epistle, says that we joyfully celebrate the eighth day, in memory of the resurrection of our Savior, because it was on this day he rose again and ascended into heaven ; and Ignatius the martyr, in his letter to the Magnesians, would have us honor this day of the Lord, this day of the resurrection, as the first and most excellent of days."

The greatness of the event (the resurrection) which the day is designed to commemorate fully, justifies the change.

Without attempting to derogate from the grandeur of the original creation, we may compare with it the still more glorious work of redemption. The former was but preliminary to the latter. It was in importance as the temple is to the divinity who is to gladden it by his presence. Why was this scene of terrestrial wonders brought into existence ? Not simply to show what natural glories God could spread forth to the eyes of an admiring universe ; not surely for this alone ; but the world was made primarily with a view to its being the theatre of God's redeeming mercy. The grand moral transaction which was to be enacted upon it, was the all-absorbing point of interest to God and to his holy universe. When the objects for which the creation came into existence are accomplished, we are assured that all its mighty mechanism will be broken to pieces. It was not destined to immutability. The fires are to consume it ; and so complete is to be the destruction, that " no place will be found for it." But the work of redemption has the stamp of eternity. The soul is its object, and that soul is, in its very nature, undying. The glory of God—his *moral* glory—is its end; and *that* must shine when every trace of earthly glory is gone forever. How clear then is it that this world is but subsidiary to the greater work of redemption ! It is but as the scaffolding around the indestructible

temple of salvation. When that temple shall have its top-stone laid, and the finishing touch of the great builder shall be given to it, the scaffolding shall be taken down, and the full and grand proportions of this moral architecture shall stand forth to the admiring eyes of all holy intelligences.

There is therefore a good and sufficient reason why the resurrection, which was a sort of closing triumph of the Redeemer's work, should be commemorated by the change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week.

We say then, the common appellation, "the Lord's day;" its universal observance by all Christians from the times of the apostles until the present time; its recognition by synods and by the Christian emperors from Constantine onwards; the blessing of God upon it in the great pentecostal revival, and ever since in the conversion of thousands and tens of thousands more—all prove, that "this is the day emphatically which the Lord has made;" and that, whilst the Sabbath, as to its high moral duties and obligations, remains the same from the creation till now, yet its observance is pushed forward one day to embrace the most glorious event in the works of God—the redemption of the church by the death and resurrection of Jesus.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SABBATH MADE FOR MAN.

THE foregoing considerations illustrate what our Savior, in one short sentence, has asserted; that "the Sabbath was made for man." It appears to have been appointed for the recreation of his body and for the improvement of his mind

and heart. Coeval with marriage, this institution has descended to us, hand in hand with that twin-sister of social bliss; as if Providence designed, by these two, to save, out of the almost universal wreck which sin has caused, some gleanings of happiness for man.

The Sabbath was no doubt important to man even in his state of innocence. He was placed in a garden, not to repose in listless indolence beneath its shades, but he was there "to dress and to keep it." He had employment, though he was not condemned to toil for his subsistence. It was such employment simply as gave elasticity to his spirits and an agreeable weariness to his muscles. It led him to converse intimately with God's works, especially in the mysteries of the vegetable world. It is to be presumed, that with primeval man every day was, in a sense, a devotional day—that each hour as it flew, bore on its wing some grateful expression of a heart that beat with undeviating affection towards its Maker. Still it seems that the Almighty, though he approved with answering love each hour's devotion, thought proper to consecrate an entire day, when, laying aside the innocent employments of Eden, man should occupy himself in direct acts of worship to Jehovah. Thus did this paradisaical Sabbath teach the paramount obligations of devotion—strictly so called—amid scenes where every ordinary emotion partook somewhat of a devotional character.

But "the Sabbath was made for man," with reference to him more especially as *fallen*, and as needing the help which such an institution affords both to his body and his soul.

After sin had entered into the world, one of the immediate consequences was, the necessity for constant toil to subdue the earth, and to extract from it the food necessary for

man and beast. "Cursed was the ground for man's sake." From the moment this malediction was pronounced, the earth smiled no longer, an Eden whose spontaneous fruits invited the eye and regaled the taste; but thorns and nettles overspread its surface, and man was doomed to obtain his bread in the "sweat of his face." Thenceforward his eyes were turned downwards, and his back was bent towards that soil which must be implored first to support life, and which is destined at last to receive into its bosom the wearied and worn-out tabernacle of the flesh. This decree of Heaven is fulfilled in the never ceasing toil of successive generations, delving, in some instances, for a bare subsistence, and in others, to accumulate exhaustless stores of affluence. But how soon would the mortal frame-work wear out, if this labor were not broken by some intervals of rest! In mercy to the body, Providence has interposed the night, when gathering shades invite to repose, and the darkness hinders the ambitious and the covetous from driving on their schemes of glory or of gain. Nor is this all; there comes around the weekly Sabbath, wherein our Maker forbids us to ply the exhausted energies, and commands us to allow them one day in seven for rest and for recreation. Merciful provision! Both man and beast share in its influence; and even sympathizing nature seems to rejoice in its holy tranquility.

If this institution were necessary or important in the *primeval* state, how much more important to us as *fallen* creatures! The body then, like the soul, was immortal, and its weariness was but a pleasurable excitement of the muscles, preparing them for the enjoyment of dewy rest; whereas now, our weakness is premonitory of dissolution; and the involuntary pressure of care and labor, should, we think, enhance in our estimation the value of a day which tends so

directly to recruit and strengthen our exhausted faculties. However men of sordid minds may grudge this precious interval, and to whatever unhallowed purposes they may presume to desecrate it, still it is one of the greatest blessings to fallen man; and it speaks of the care and kindness of his Maker even towards his physical weaknesses. The body and mind of man must have rest. They must have more than the season of sleep allows. Besides, it is according to the analogy of nature. The works of God, though they seem so full of variety and of change have their Sabbaths—their seasons of repose. The ocean is not always agitated; but sleeps, at times, in unbroken tranquility. The winds are not always in motion; but are often hushed, as if the zephyr even had ceased to breathe. The bird is not forever on the wing, nor the beast of the forest always in pursuit of his prey. Behold the seasons! See how nature comes forth recruited after her temporary repose! And shall man wish to ply with incessant toil the poor body, so easily fatigued and so soon to faint and die? Shall he deny the necessity of a Sabbath to eke out its little strength or impugn that divine wisdom which has appointed it for so beneficent a purpose? What a happy period will that be, when, acting under the authority of all the divine commands, men will allow to themselves, to their dependents, and to their cattle, this season of rest from the cares and toils of earth! How much it will tend to break the force of those evils which, through sin, have invaded the physical frame, and made it, in most instances, the abused instrument of unrighteousness! A universal Sabbath! Who would not implore the God of the Sabbath to roll on its advent, and give to earth a rest from the burdens which have so long and so grievously afflicted her?

But the *soul* of man needs the influence of the Sabbath

as well as the *body*. It is "a rest for wearied minds." The Creator, in its appointment, had a view principally to our *spiritual* improvement.

The necessity for toil which was laid upon the body reaches equally the soul, in that constant care for the things of earth, which, in the first instance, applies to a bare subsistence; but subsequently respects a thousand forms of mere sensual gratification.

Man is now "of the earth, earthy." He draws from it his aliment; he looks upon it as the prolific source of his gains; and his mind fixes on its vegetable and mineral productions as the foundations of civilized greatness. In his selfish appropriation of its fruits, he almost forgets that God made it; or that he challenges the gratitude of man for every blessing which it affords. The animal that grazes on its herbage is as thoughtful of the divine goodness as multitudes who gather out of its bosom the means of support and of affluence. How needful then to break in upon this earthly and selfish soul, and by some means to teach it, that God is the giver of all good; and that it is *his* hand which openeth, "to satisfy the desires of every living thing."

But suppose there was no weekly interruption of our labors; that every day was alike a day of toil; that our eye was ever bent on this earthly clod, and our hand busied unceasingly in its cultivation; should we be likely to think of the immortal part of our nature, or to make provision for its present happiness or its future destiny? Would not the carnal principle triumph even more than it does now; and would not God and the obligations which we owe to Him be forgotten, in the all-absorbing pursuit of temporal gains?

It would seem that, in prospect of such a result, our gracious Benefactor has interposed this day of rest, and called us to cease not only from bodily labor, but from the cares

and anxieties which, in connection with such labor, must press upon the soul.

It is to lift the mind up from earth, and to bid it look towards the heavens, that this sacred day is provided. Man is called upon to erect himself; and to remember, that whilst the body is of earthly mould, the soul is immortal and accountable. He is to consider that a higher destiny awaits him, and a nobler provision is in reserve for him, if, obedient to heaven's call, he subjects the body to the soul, and prefers the interests of eternity to those of time.

The Sabbath is all-important not only to the Christian, who hails its privileges as the foretaste of heaven, and gathers on this day a double portion of the spiritual manna to refresh the soul; but of what incalculable importance is it to those who as yet have not learned to appreciate its holy rest! Yes; it was made even for thoughtless, wordly-minded man; and much as it may be despised by him; or irksome as its restraints, in many instances, are to him; yet let him understand, that, were it not for this day to break in upon his habits of sensuality and of sin—to call him off from the intense application to earthly things which characterizes him—his immortal interests would be put in even greater peril than they are now; and the hope of his salvation would be well nigh extinguished. But the Sabbath dawns upon this votary of earth, and speaks of nobler pursuits, and tenders to him a brighter reward. It checks the soul in its career, and stirs up within it the recollection of its original state, and the conviction of its present miseries. It is a pause most healthful, wherein the claims of God may be heard over the importunate claims of the world; and when the still small voice steals into the moral sensibilities, and awakens man to the consideration of his character and of his destiny. Blot out this day from the moral

calendar, and allow the naturally earthly mind to take an unyielding grasp of its pursuits—to hold on to them week after week and year after year—and who cannot foresee a rapid deterioration of the nobler attributes of our nature, if not a total extinction of the hopes of salvation?

Nor can we sufficiently admire the wisdom and beneficence of God in placing this barrier across our path to death, and thus making that self-ruin which we are bent on the more difficult; so that, in accomplishing it, we must break through or trample down this merciful obstruction. How does the voice divine seem to speak in the sacred stillness of this day! How does the conscience respond to its obligations; whilst mercy, as if seated on her pure and lovely throne, with an eye that weeps over our sins, and a hand that bears in it the cup of salvation, invites us to improve this day of our visitation, and to prepare for heaven's unending joys!

It was in this sense that the Sabbath was made for man. God intended it to be the day of his salvation. Such it has been to thousands and tens of thousands, who on this day have listened to the gospel message, and felt its power in a conviction of their guilt and in the implantation of a hope of the divine forgiveness. It is on this day, that the messenger of the gospel lifts up his voice, and invites the weary and the heavy-laden to come to Jesus and find rest. All who are pressed with earthly cares, or who are bowed down under earthly burdens, may here find a grateful reception, and feel their sorrows assuaged by a hand that has promised to wipe away all tears from our eyes.

CHAPTER V.

IMPORTANCE OF THE SABBATH IN ITS BEARINGS ON INTELLECTUAL AND SOCIAL IMPROVEMENT.

WHILST the highest glory of the sacred day respects its direct moral influence, in abstracting the soul from earthly cares, and pressing upon its attention its responsibility to God; yet are there *incidental advantages*, which it brings along with it, worthy of grateful consideration.

Every person of observation must perceive, that the effect on the mind of a perpetual attention to mere secular business, is to narrow its conceptions and to cramp its nobler energies. This is especially evident where the employment is such as to give but little scope to the intellectual faculties. The mere daily task to which the laborer applies himself, comes to be but a mechanical movement of the muscles. In learning the trade or art, the mind may originally have been somewhat exercised; but after much experience, it ceases to be greatly interested. The mechanic or the husbandman has in general but little to excite the higher faculties, and to keep them in constant and improving action. I say, in *general;* because there are instances in both departments of labor, where genius and enterprise are strongly developed. The great mass of mind however is not thus roused to activity; and when the day's work is done, it is scarcely conscious of having put forth a mental effort in the task.

But where the employment, according to general estimation, requires more thought, it will still appear that the sphere is but a circumscribed one, even allowing some degree of perfection is attained in it. The tradesman who

confines his mind closely to his particular business, and, by his success, proves himself a proficient in it, may, if questioned on other and more important topics, show a humiliating ignorance. Thus whilst the mind, on a given subject, may discover shrewdness, its general character, by the denial of a wider sphere in which to exercise itself, may experience a serious deprivation.

These opinions are advanced, not with a view of depreciating an honorable employment, but simply to show, that most of the occupations necessary for man in his present state, have a tendency to retain the mind within a very narrow sphere, and deny to it that opportunity of improvement which its immortal nature demands. How few of the millions of earth's inhabitants can enjoy the privilege of high mental cultivation! How must the immense majority apply their thoughts, from year to year, to the mere point of supplying their daily wants! In such circumstances, it has pleased a beneficent Creator to ordain one day in the week for a sort of culture, which, acting directly on the interests of the soul, is, at the same time, calculated to raise the intellect above the contracted limits where it is usually confined, and to throw upon its view such topics as would naturally improve its powers. This immense advantage cannot be appreciated but by a comparison of those who dwell under Sabbath influences with those who are denied them.

Not merely would the moral interests, by unceasing toil, suffer a gradual deterioration, but in corresponding rapidity would the mind itself be cramped and fettered. Think then of the vast importance of the Sabbath to the general intellect of the nation! It reaches or is designed to reach every class of men, and lays its instructions before the humblest no less than the most gifted citizen. It invites the entire mass of mind to a contemplation of themes the grandest

and the most imposing which can awaken and interest its attention this side of eternity. It is intended there shall be, for one whole day in the week, a suspension of our ordinary pursuits, to give place to a species of intellectual and moral training, which augments powerfully the spiritual and intellectual over the animal impulses. Here, on this day of rest, the soul may receive those impressions of divine truth, which fashion it, by God's blessing, to a sublimer mould of moral beauty. Here, the mind, which has been denied the advantages of early culture, or which, by the stern necessity of nature's first law, is obliged to think throughout the six days on *one* theme—and that not calculated to enlarge its capacities—may come and sit at the feet of a Teacher, who spake as never man spake; and may weekly learn from that divine Teacher lessons which man, in his collected wisdom, could never impart. Can we appreciate this privilege? Can we gather up and exhibit the results to the soul and to the intellect, which the weekly Sabbath affords; or can we say, how much of direct improvement is gained to all classes, high as well as low, by this too much neglected institution of heaven?

Consider the range of subjects which are discussed in the sanctuary! The being of God—the creation of the world—man's origin, his innocence and his fall—the moral history of our race—the attributes of God—the duties we owe to him—the nature and consequences of sin—the glorious work of redemption by Jesus Christ—the mystery of the incarnation—the death and resurrection of Christ—the accountability of man, and the day of retribution—the glories of heaven—the obligations of the moral law, embracing all the duties which we owe to our neighbor as well as those which we owe to God—such, without including sacred antiquities, are some of the topics which on the day of rest are

spread before the mind. Can any person deny an incalculable improvement from such a weekly training enjoyed all over the land, and by every class of our citizens? "Blessed indeed is the people"—even in an intellectual point of view—"that know the joyful sound."

Let every man then who values the improvement of the intellect stand by the Sabbath and its institutions. Let no rude hand, laid on this ark of God to demolish it, be encouraged; but let every such effort be frowned upon as an attempt not only to put out the light of religion, but to shroud the intellect in midnight gloom.

If illustration were needed of the good effects of the Sabbath in intellectual as well as moral improvement, we might cite the examples of Scotland and of New England, where this institution is more generally respected and more scrupulously observed, than by any other equally extensive communities.

Now it is the united testimony of those who are acquainted intimately with these sections of the civilized world, that there is more general intelligence and a stronger common sense, running through all classes of their population, than are to be found so generally any where else. But to what is this intellectual superiority to be attributed? Shall not their respect for, and attention to Sabbath instructions come in for a part at least of the elevating influence?

When it is considered that the inhabitants of these countries, by almost common consent,—laying aside every secular employment and suspending every pursuit of mere pleasure,—are accustomed to attend upon the worship of God, and to listen to the expositions of his holy word; when young and old, rich and poor, are seen giving their fixed and serious attention to this day of moral and intellectual culture; the effect, it must be conceded, is to make them

not only the most moral but the most intelligent of communities.

Other influences, we admit, are associated with this, in raising and sustaining the mass of mind to the point of practical intelligence to which it seems to have arrived. Their excellent system of common-school education—their Sunday schools—their fire-side instructions, all unite in the work of improvement; but even these owe their origin and their healthful operation, in a great measure, to the Sabbath and its divine teachings. *This* is the fountain and *those* are the salubrious streams. Were this sacred day to fall into disrepute, how soon would even these favored regions sink in mind as well as morals; and with the fountain corrupted or exhausted, how certainly would every streamlet of good be tainted or finally dried up! A dark day, to Scotland and to New England, would *that* be, which should see their Sabbaths merged in the secular week, whilst the people were scattered "as sheep without a shepherd," and their hills and vallies were to echo no more to the music of "the church going bell." The shock would be felt in every department of mental labor. The sun of their glory would be suddenly eclipsed. The tender intellect would droop in the bud, and the man of giant powers, after a few convulsive efforts, would expire without the hope even of a successor in intellectual greatness.

Men of mere worldly wisdom are not willing to concede the dependence of the intellect on religion. Because a few specimens of cultivated intellect have in every age exhibited themselves independent of, and often in opposition to religion, the inference has been, that the institutions of religion are not a necessary auxiliary in the development of mind. But without inquiring how much the characters just alluded to, may, in their earlier impulses, have been indebt-

ed to religion; or showing, that many of their most polished weapons have been stolen from her armory, and then turned against her cause; we claim, that the general intelligence of great communities is very intimately connected with and dependent on christian institutions. The remarks already submitted, go to prove this. Never can the mass of mind be hopefully cultivated without the aid of religion in some way. Her power *must* be felt at least in the administration of discipline; for experiment upon experiment has proved, that appeals to honor, or to ambition, or even to virtue unsupported by piety, are inefficient in controling the passions, and in awakening the industry of the youthful mind.

What supreme folly was exhibited a few years ago, in an exclusive codicil of a rich man's will,* whereby an attempt has been made to divorce religion from benevolence—to provide for the orphan mind without a recognition of the orphan's God—to erect a proud temple to science, and yet command piety—ever the patroness of science—to stand without the gates. Never can the experiment succeed. The orphan will be an orphan still, if no hallowing influence of religion is allowed to reach his heart and mind. His soul will awake to no voice so soon as the voice of gospel truth; nor find in any inferior motive a sufficient impulse to bear it forward in the pursuit of knowledge. There is something melancholy in the idea, that these orphans are to be entombed, as it were, in that splendid pile of Grecian architecture, which, without the enlivening influence of religion, we venture to predict, must prove but a mental mausoleum.

Since then the Sabbath is the great day of weekly train-

* Stephen Girard, Philadelphia.

ing to the general intellect of the nation, operating directly through its ministry and its Sunday schools to interest and strengthen as well as to purify the mind, how should every good citizen, we again say, sustain by his example and his pecuniary patronage its salutary institutions!

CHAPTER VI.

THE SABBATH PROMOTIVE OF SOCIAL IMPROVEMENT.

The social propensity of our nature leads us to desire the fellowship of kindred minds. This is a universal characteristic of man. Its indulgence however is not always innocent or improving. On the contrary it is not unfrequently the source of great moral corruption. The social sympathies, when not purified by religion, may become a powerful medium of evil influence; and men will occasionally perpetrate, in company, an amount of wickedness, which, on their solitary responsibility, they would not dare to contemplate.

As a means of counteracting this evil tendency, God has given us the weekly Sabbath, wherein these social sympathies are awakened and strengthened under circumstances, not only innocent, but highly improving. The selfish aims which, in ordinary business conventions, operate to draw men together are not influential here; but man meets his fellow man to sacrifice on holy ground his prejudices, and to recognize the superiority of those distinctions which relate to *moral* character. On the Sabbath, and in the sanctuary, the heart is addressed by motives which apply with equal force to all; and which annihilate, for the time being

at least, the adventitious distinctions of earth. Whatever may have been the difference of birth, or of education, or of outward meanness or grandeur, all are made to feel that they have a common origin, and a like fearful destiny. They are drawn together on the principle of a common guilt and danger, exposing each individual to wrath divine; and in view of which each one must take the same lowly and penitent position, and must look alone to the same gracious deliverer. A ship-wrecked company, before the storm, may be divided off into several grades of character and influence, from the poor cabin-boy to the titled passenger or authoritative commander; and they may manifest no special interest in each other so long as nothing occurs to break down these social barriers. But as the storm rises and the vessel reels and plunges, until her parting timbers show the ruin that impends, the distinctions of rank and of condition are lost sight of, and the principles of a common humanity are felt in their full force. Somewhat similar is the effect of a frequent contemplation of that moral ruin which has come upon us all; and which threatens as heavy a destruction on the high as on the low in society. When in the sanctuary, this sad truth is exhibited, can man pride himself in circumstantial greatness? Must he not feel a fellowship in moral suffering and guilt, with the humblest worshipper in the assembly? And when it is announced, that heaven's mercy is as free to the poor and the ignorant as to the affluent and the learned, must he not see and feel, that "God is no respecter of persons?"

But it is not alone those of superior condition in life on whom the Sabbath and its institutions operate favorably in a social point of view; the prejudices which those in an inferior condition sometimes entertain towards those who are in certain respects their superiors, are as strong and as diffi-

cult of removal, as are the vanity and pride of the latter on account of a providential superiority. It is too apt to be the case, that outward splendor is interpreted as the sure indication of a proud and haughty spirit. Happily therefore, the Sabbath and the sanctuary bring these extremes of society into nearer contact, and place them together under circumstances calculated to remove all unjust suspicions and prejudices. When the man of riches or of learning is seen bowed in humility by the side of the humblest artisan—when *his* eye is filled with tears, and *his* prayer is heard for forgiveness, how must every unkind prejudice be driven out of the mind; whilst it is acknowledged, that religion can at the same moment, carry its consolations into the heart of a Nicodemus and of a Magdalen.

It is impossible to estimate the importance of this holy day, in thus associating all classes in the worship of God —in eradicating prejudices—kindling a spirit of charity and kindness; so that, whilst it purifies our moral, it improves, at the same time, our *social* nature. Nor can we say, how much we are indebted to it, as a means of mutual respect among all classes; since moral superiority is thus often exhibited in its loveliest forms, by those to whom Providence has denied the distinction of an outward grandeur.

The Sabbath gathers around heaven's altars, almost the entire population of towns and villages; and having congregated where human distinctions are not known, nor base passions likely to be stirred, they all bow together under a sense of common obligation, supplicating the Father of mercies—who is the Father of all—to forgive their sins and bestow his grace in time of need; whilst the Holy Spirit breathes over them his subduing influence, thus qualifying them for the service of God and disposing them more effectually to love and serve each other. Can such an assembly

break up without an additional sense of fraternal obligations; or should any vindictive or unbrotherly feelings have been entertained, are they not here likely to be repented of and eradicated? Does not our holy religion say to the vindictive, "leave thy gift at the altar, and first go and be reconciled to thy brother?" O the softening and subduing influence which this day of love exerts upon the stormy passions of the soul! How difficult for man to yield himself to its weekly services and still retain any unkindness of feeling towards his fellow man!

How many incidental charms does this blessed day bring along with it! It arrays the body in its best apparel; and since neatness and moral improvement have strong affinities, it thus prepares the way for the adorning of the spirit, in order that we may wait properly on the king of Zion, whose weekly audience day is open for all to come and pay him the homage of sincere devotion. The Sabbath was indeed made for man; and for man as a social being. Then, with his family and his friends, he may meet at the "gate of heaven" to render a service the most important and sublime; and which, whilst it brings glory to God and good to the worshippers, casts over the whole face of society a softening radiance, linking together in works of benevolence the rich and the poor, and making them the common recipients and the common almoners of heaven's bounty to mankind.

CHAPTER VII.

CONSERVATIVE INFLUENCE OF THE SABBATH.

From the foregoing remarks it is plain, that the Sabbath tends to bring into exercise the social and benevolent feelings, as antagonist to the selfish principles of our nature. It must therefore be a means of binding together in harmony and love those communities which respect and attend upon its institutions.

By congregating for public worship, men acknowledge themselves christian brethren, under obligations to the same Almighty Being, and through his authority, to each other, in all the offices of social benevolence. This is a bond of union, strong in proportion to the pure principles and high sanctions in which it originates. Under these circumstances, the *general* good will be likely to draw attention, when any question of great practical importance is agitated. Personal and local prejudices and mere selfish aims will not have the same sway in the adjustment of difficulties, or in the projection of public improvements, as they would have, were the institutions of religion habitually neglected. The very principle, "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," cannot fail to exert some influence against that natural selfishness which blinds us to the claims of others; or which, when a personal advantage may be taken, tempts us to invade their rights or their interests.

The Lord's day inculcates also, in its moral lessons, the importance of a faithful discharge of all the relative duties. By an attention to the instructions of the sanctuary, we find, that it is as much a part of religion to discharge our obligations to our neighbor and to society in general as it is

to make sure our own title to heaven. We are also taught, as citizens, to do honor to the civil magistrate, and to obey—where conscience is not violated—the laws of the land. These obligations, derived from divine authority, are explained and enforced on the Sabbath. Who then can doubt the conservative influence of this day with its moral lessons and its authoritative mandates? Can the restless, revolutionary spirit find encouragement in its treasonable designs; or can a disregard for law and civil authority be engendered where the whole bearing of the sacred lesson is to repress and exterminate hatred and covetousness, violence and ambition?

There is probably no ligature which binds together the social state more strongly than this; nor is there any influence more constant and sure, in retaining the discordant moral elements in union. Patriotism, without religion as its basis, cannot, with certainty, be depended on. There must be moral principle, or salutary laws will not be likely to be framed, nor, if framed, will they be generally respected and obeyed. In the absence of coercion by standing armies—a system which, under imperial governments, is justified on the ground of necessity—the citizens of a republic must look to the virtue and general intelligence of the mass of the people, as the only sure pledge for the discharge of public and social obligations. As the Sabbath exerts over the intellect of the nation so mighty an influence to elevate and to improve it, so no other means is so effectual on a great scale, to suppress vice and to encourage virtue. It thus becomes the great van-guard of general morality, and tends to strengthen the main securities to which—as a free people—we must look for the preservation of our civil institutions.

It will not be denied —after such convincing experiments

as have been furnished—that mankind, until they are both virtuous and intelligent, are unfitted for self-government. *Mere* intelligence is not enough. The French nation were intelligent, but they were not virtuous, when the fatal experiment was tried, of passing suddenly from a regal to a popular government. Moral principle was wanting, and hence the transition was to desolating anarchy. The religion of the nation —if any religion it could be said to have had—was darkness not light. There was no Sabbath, none that deserved the name ; for it is well known, that the Sabbath, where papal influence takes the lead, is a mere gala-day, one part of which is spent in solemn mummery, and the remainder in theatrical exhibitions and in sensual riot.

The political revolutions in South America, which have followed each other in such rapid succession, are additional testimony to the position that, where the popular will is the governing impulse, virtue and intelligence must be the basis of a government. The religion of these countries, as of France, is Christian in nothing scarcely but in name, whilst ignorance and vice pervade the great mass of the people. But why need examples be multiplied to illustrate a point so plain? What intelligent mind but must see the immense importance of the Sabbath—with its varied religious teaching—in creating a healthful tone of morals, and thus throwing around our civil institutions a security which no other means could supersede or supply?

Whatever may be our sectional jealousies ; or numerous as may be the conflicting interests which agitate our political conventions, it is delightful to reflect, that when the day of holy rest returns, party animosity is in general laid aside ; and we meet over the length and breadth of the land, to acknowledge at God's altars, the same blessings of freedom, and to implore for each other the healthful spirit of

piety. Then the prayer goes up to the Father of mercies, that we may be a prosperous and united people—that the spirit of brotherhood may supplant that of discord; and that, whatever of evil in operation or in design exists to weaken our national compact, may, by a wise and holy Providence, be averted or be overruled for good.

Such being the influence of the Sabbath on our great national interests, it must pour its purifying waters into the very fountain of our prosperity. It must neutralize, if it do not actually exterminate, all that is bitter or poisonous. Sending its vivifying streams into every department of social life, it *must* nourish the tree of liberty, and perpetuate its grateful shade and its salubrious fruits for the benefit of the remotest posterity.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN APPEAL TO MEN OF INFLUENCE IN FAVOR OF THE SABBATH.

THE train of remark in the preceding chapters is designed to lead to one grand practical inference, viz. *that the obligations to keep holy the Sabbath day extend to all classes and descriptions of men.*

The origin of the Sabbath, it appears, was coeval with the origin of our race; and was therefore intended to follow down the stream of time, and to exact the respect and homage of accountable man through each successive generation.

The injunction to keep the Sabbath was renewed at mount Sinai amid circumstances of deep solemnity; when

Jehovah, the great moral Law-giver, stereotyped the precept which relates to it in the very centre of the decalogue, thus indicating, by its relative position, its perpetual and universal obligation.

The great event which led to the change of the day—an event equally interesting to all mankind—impresses us with the same idea. The fact, that the Sabbath was made for man; to improve both his moral and his intellectual nature —that it reaches all classes by its healthful influence—that it strengthens and purifies the social bond; removing prejudices and promoting charity and kindness—that, in relation to all our civil institutions, it is strongly conservative in its influence; all this, goes to prove, the general obligation to respect and to keep inviolate the appointed day of rest.

It would seem as if no man could properly claim to be a philanthropist, who by his example or in his discourse aims to weaken the moral power of so salutary an institution. Patriotism is not, we know, the grand motive which should influence men in the observance of this day. High above this stands the authority of God. The edict, "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," comes from the very throne of the Eternal. But as the divine laws were framed with a view to man's interests for time as well as for eternity, it so happens in this as in every analogous case, that godliness is profitable even for the life that now is. Patriotism and piety are here closely united. The Sabbath is a perennial source of public virtue. On this ground, it appeals to every citizen for his respect and his example in its favor; and he who thinks lightly of the institution, or who habitually desecrates it, evinces at the same time a disregard for the general good and a practical disrespect for the commands of his Maker.

Men of the world—though slow to learn the superiority

of the divine wisdom—will find, at last, that the strict observance of the Sabbath is the sure criterion of healthful morals and of general prosperity. Every enterprise which concedes not this point ; which is prosecuted in violation of this precept of the decalogue, can have, we think, but an ephemeral success. It is not possible to cast contempt on God's commands and prosper. The doctrine of providence must be denied, or man cannot abjure heaven's authority and hope to be blessed. No nation can exist long—as a free nation—without the Sabbath ; and every plan or business which invalidates this moral and social bulwark, tends, at the same time, to undermine our civil institutions.

How sad a spectacle is it therefore, when a practical disregard for the Sabbath is seen among the nation's rulers and representatives! What short-sighted policy, to invade and desecrate this day which God has challenged to himself for the express purposes of rest and of devotion! Are they serving their country when they are dishonoring their God ? Why, we would ask, must the whole land be driven over on the Sabbath, in order to carry forward one day the privilege of letter and newspaper communication ? The thunder of these vehicles is heard in our towns and villages, disturbing often the sanctuary of God, and drawing together an idle multitude who might otherwise be induced to attend upon divine worship. No pious man, from conscientious scruples, can accept of office or employment in this vast Sabbath-desecrating department. How many brute animals also, who, by God's law, have a right to rest as well as man, are jaded and broken down in this unhallowed business! How many immortals are hereby denied the privilege of that moral culture which the sanctuary tenders! What excitement about the news, when the twanging horn announces the arrival of the mail! What a rush to seize

the latest intelligence; and how are the hours of the Sabbath desecrated in poring over it! How is heaven's truth —even when it has made some hopeful impressions—neutralized by such Sunday reading as this! Do our rulers understand that this systematic disregard of God's law tends to the overthrow of our free institutions? Do they reflect that every thing which deadens the conscience of the nation is premonitory of the downfall of our liberties?

Look again at the occasional invasion of the Sabbath by congressional legislation. What a spectacle! The representatives of a free nation—a *christian* nation—pushing their business into the Sabbath! On this sad example the eyes of millions are riveted. What is done at the fountain-head of power descends in every direction and spreads all over the land. What a blow is thus given to this vital institution! Who can tell how deep a wound is inflicted on the morals of our country, and through these, on the cause of civil liberty?

Let men in power and men of influence generally, remember, that we rest on them a responsibility in regard to Sabbath observance, which exceeds simply their own personal obedience or disobedience; for multitudes are swayed by their example who have not as yet raised their eyes to the great source of all moral obligation. When we can see a reform among the influential, we may confidently look for an improvement in every department of society; and this blessed day may exert once more its designed effect upon the mind and heart of the nation, to purify what is wrong and to perpetuate what is good in our social compact.

PART II.

PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT OF THE SABBATH.

CHAPTER I.

THE SABBATH A DEVOTIONAL DAY.

In order to avail ourselves of the privileges of the Sabbath, it should be made, as far as possible, a strictly devotional day. A deep sense of its value, as a season of spiritual improvement, should be entertained ; and its services should be attended upon so that, through divine grace, they may become a foretaste of the heavenly rest which it symbolizes.

I propose, therefore, to present some considerations which may aid the reader in keeping this holy day in such a manner, as to ensure the attainment of those blessings which it was designed to impart.

There is reason to fear, that even among a certain class of professors of religion, there has been a growing tendency to a lax and careless attention to Sabbath obligations. So much has been said against the puritanical strictness of our ancestors—and said in many instances with a view to cast contempt upon that pious generation—that some, who love the praise of men more than the praise of God, are in danger of verging to the opposite extreme ; and instead of incurring ridicule for their zeal and scrupulousness, they are likely to awaken the surprise if not the cen-

sure of the wicked, for their disrespect towards a divine institution. It is plain to every reader, on which extreme it is safest to be found.

I will not say that the Puritans of New England were patterns, in every particular, of what is right and proper in the practice of religion; but it is due to their memory to declare, that their standard of practical piety was such as to shame the compromising spirit of later times; and that even their failings "leaned to virtue's side." They are the last men in the world to furnish a theme for the satirist.

But the important question with us relates to our *own* standard of piety, with respect to the moral and positive institutions of Heaven. Are we not, though professing to esteem all the precepts of the law to be right, chargeable, to some extent, with a lax and criminal deportment in relation to the obligations of the fourth commandment? That there is a very extensive violation of the Lord's day is generally admitted. The public highways and thorough-fares show it. Thoughtless thousands are rushing on in pursuit of business or pleasure; and every species of vehicle, designed to move on land or water, is put under contribution in this work of general desecration. An immense portion of our population regard this day as a mere season of recreation, without a single thought of its devotional aspect, or a twinge of conscience on account of its open and habitual violation. Would this be so, if all who profess to "fear God and to keep his commandments" were uniformly strict in the consecration of this entire day to the service of religion? Would not the Sabbath-breaker stand rebuked by the example of the pious; and is there not some reason to believe, that a great reform might commence, which would ultimately rescue from general disrespect, this day of our solemnities?

But our own improvement in piety, no less than the influence which a right example exerts, is reason sufficient why we should make some advance in a strict and conscientious regard for Sabbath duties. If this day was "made for man," it was made in a very special sense, for a *christian* man. It is the day which reminds him of his obligations to Jesus; and which bids him rejoice and be glad, in view of the consummating act of redemption, the glorious resurrection. It invites him away from the perplexing cares of earth; and taking him up to Pisgah, bids him survey the green hills and the valleys of Canaan, which are to compensate for the toils and trials of his pilgrimage. On this day a double portion of the heavenly manna is given; and the water of life flows clear and exhilarating from the cleft rock of salvation. Each successive Sabbath might be made to approximate in symbolical purity and joy, that final rest which remains for the people of God. These days of mercy should be considered as so many steps of a mighty terraced walk to heaven; and the soul should rise step after step on this grand vestibule towards the upper temple, until it could cast its eager glance into the very gates of the New Jerusalem.

But whilst such are the blessings which the Sabbath tenders to the Christian; how few avail themselves of them by a proper sanctification of the day! How little preparation is made to meet its duties, or to reap the full advantage of its instructions! What slight excuses are allowed to operate in preventing an attendance upon the sanctuary! How easily will conscience be bribed to acquiescence, in a partial desecration of hallowed time! How will the world, with its cares or its pleasures, be suffered to press upon the beginning and the termination of the day; whilst every part of it will partake, more or less, of the spirit of this obtrusive rival! Under the indefinite exception of "works of neces-

sity and mercy," we are tempted to rob God of his claims and to minister to our own covetousness, sensuality or convenience. Let *Christians* at least, " remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." *Let them aim to secure from all secular intrusion, the whole twenty-four hours of sacred time.* Let them put off their earthly burdens in time to erect the bowed-down spirit, and to send its grateful aspirations towards heaven. Never let them be seen—*except in cases of undoubted necessity*—on any journey, or in any employment, by which men are wont to violate the sacred day. It must be with them a strictly devotional day. The body must rest from toil, the mind from corroding care, and the soul from sin. Leaving the dull earth far behind, we should rise into the salubrious regions of gospel purity, and take a full inspiration of the air of heaven.

CHAPTER II.

SATURDAY EVENING; OR THE PREPARATION.

It was customary in patriarchal times, to prepare the mind for the proper celebration of their sacred festivals. By the command of God, they were to sanctify themselves; to separate their thoughts from the world, and to direct them towards the holy services which they were anticipating. We do not insist that under the christian dispensation, the worshipper is bound, by the same explicit command, to appropriate a certain time as a preparation-season for the Sabbath; but the *expediency* of such preparation cannot be questioned. The mind that is fixed for six days on mere secular business, cannot at once pass from this

sphere of earthly associations into the hallowed employments of the Sabbath. It must necessarily carry the taint of its grovelling pursuits into holy time. It is not easy to throw off from the soul all its burdens, and command its undivided attention to purely spiritual topics. As well almost, might you expect the agitated ocean, which had been lashed into strife, to subside the instant the tempest abated. Its billows cannot at once settle away, nor suddenly cease their hoarse murmurs. There is an interval between the storm and the calm, demanded by nature; whose transitions are seldom violent; and whose actings may afford some hints to man in relation to his spiritual improvement.

To carry forward our worldly business or pleasures to the last hour of secular time, and to dismiss them only when conscience would be outraged by their continuance, evinces too deep an interest in temporal concerns, and too much disregard for the higher interests of eternity. Nor may the man who thus acts, expect to pass into the privileged hours of holy rest, and profit by their instructions. He will find his thoughts slow to enter upon the solemn work. They will be reaching back after their accustomed topics of interest. A reluctant and imperfect service will be likely to be rendered; too much like that complained of by Jehovah, when ancient Israel "drew nigh unto him with their mouth and honored him with their lips, whilst their heart was far from him."

To avoid these evils, and to secure the full advantages of the Sabbath, it is important to divest the mind of its ordinary cares, as much as possible, on Saturday evening; and to allow an interval for prayerful preparation; that the transition, from secular to sacred pursuits, may be easy and natural. The earthly burdens may thus be effectually unloosed, and the soul be in a measure disposed for its appro-

priate work. A proper reverence for God, and his holy day seems to demand this of us. "He will be sanctified in them that come nigh him." He expects us to put off our shoes from our feet, before we presume to tread on holy ground. It is a high degree of irreverence to rush into his august presence with a careless spirit; nor should a soul who thus acts expect to be met with the promised blessings of his grace.

It is not possible, we know, in all cases, to effect an arrangement in the business of life, so that this season of preparation may be enjoyed. The Saturday evening is, with many, the busiest portion of the week. Men seem to spur on their exhausted energies like the last struggles of a race-horse; arriving at the end of secular time jaded, and panting with overwrought action, and unfitted for the duties which the Sabbath enjoins. This is owing in a majority of cases to the want of a devotional spirit; and also to that covetousness which grudges every moment for purposes of religion, where it can be employed in securing the gains of the world.

It will be greatly to the advantage of Christians, when they can close the business of the week, so as to afford themselves the Saturday evening as a preparation-season. Then anticipating the day of rest, they may disentangle their thoughts from earth and direct them towards heaven. They may begin to plume the wings of the soul for a flight into purer regions. Holy time will then come on like the dawnings of immortality, and be met, by the exultant heart, with the song of David; "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it."

Christian reader, who hast often complained of wandering thoughts on the day of rest, ask thyself if thou art not to blame in this? Has not the world been carried too near

the line which divides sacred from secular time? Canst thou expect thy spirit to pass from a thousand grovelling cares and pleasures at once into a hallowed atmosphere, and without distraction, to fix its contemplations upon God? Thou knowest but little of the laws of mind, if such be thy expectations. It is presumption, to look for a devout frame, if there be no previous adjustment of the moral feelings to meet the responsibilities of the occasion. Unclasp then thy thoughts from the world, and, by prayer and meditation, anticipate the day of rest. Go into thy closet and invoke the Spirit's influence to qualify thee to meet thy God in his holy courts. If thou hast a family, bid them prepare for the weekly festival. Let all their arrangements be such that they shall have the full benefit of so blessed an institution. Call them away from earth's vanities in time to think of the superior claims of heaven. Gather them around the family altar and say to them; "Now we are approaching the day consecrated to God. Let us withdraw our thoughts from all secular concerns. Let us begin to invest the soul with the garments of salvation; and as we retire to our rest, let it be, under the impression that to-morrow's dawn is commemorative of the Redeemer's triumph." What a blessed introduction would this be to the privileges and joys of the Sabbath; and how confidently in such a case might we and ours look to Heaven for its sanctifying influence!

CHAPTER III.

SABBATH MORNING.

"AWAKE, psaltery and harp; I myself will awake early." David uttered this divine soliloquy, in reference probably, to the approaching Sabbath. He intended to prevent the morning light with his song of praise; and to usher in the day of rest with the melodies of psaltery and harp. O that every Christian would imitate this devotional man, and charge himself to awake early on the Sabbath morning and begin the day with God!

There is now an additional reason to summon us at early dawn to the work of prayer and praise. When David sang his morning orisons, the strain was kindled by glorious events which were in prospect; but "now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept." The seal of the sepulchre, which enclosed the Savior's body, has been broken, and his triumphant resurrection has been announced to his disciples, and chanted upon the harps of heaven. Can the Christian think of this and not feel moved to a holy activity, as this resurrection-morning comes round and invites the soul to its devotions? Alas; that we should suffer any part of the Sabbath to pass neglected or unimproved! But the melancholy fact is, that by the indulgence of the body, the soul is in many instances robbed of that portion of holy time which is all-important as a season of private prayer and meditation. There is reason to apprehend, that a very general delinquency is chargeable upon christian communities in the allowed indulgence of sloth on the morning of the Lord's day. It would seem as if, in this respect, the claims of

mammon were preferred to those of Jehovah. The husbandman may be seen, at early dawn, driving the plough or wielding the scythe and sickle, intent on cultivating or gathering in the gifts of God which are necessary for the body; but how is it when the soul is to be fed, or when the service of God is to be performed? Does he awake as early on the Sabbath, and address himself with the same alacrity to the momentous business of salvation? Does even the Christian on the Sabbath serve God as early and as eagerly as on other days he serves the world?

It is not to one class of Christians alone, that we address these interrogatories. Whatever be their employment, or wherever they may reside—whether in country or city—we fear that professors are in danger of robbing God of a part of the Sabbath, and of sleeping away, to their own spiritual injury, the very best portion of the day. With many, it seems to be considered sufficient, if they can rise in time to despatch necessities, and be ready to go up to the great congregation. Very little time is thus allowed for private devotions. How, under these circumstances, can we hope to avail ourselves of the blessings of the day? Shall we not be in danger of appearing before the king of Zion without the appropriate habiliments; and of exposing ourselves to that cutting rebuke, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?"

The morning of the Sabbath is all-important as a season of private devotion. Our first thoughts should be given to God. We should seize the earliest moments of this calm and blessed season and use them for the soul's benefit.

"When first thy eyes unveil, give thy soul leave
To do the like; our bodies but forerun
The spirit's duty; true hearts spread and heave
Unto their God, as flames do to the sun.

Give Him thy first thoughts then, so shalt thou keep
Him company all day and in Him sleep.

"Yet never sleep the sun up: prayer should
Dawn with the day; there are set awful hours
'Twixt heaven and us; the manna was not good
After sun rising: *far*-day sullies flowers:
Rise to prevent the sun; sleep doth sins glut,
And heaven's gate opens when the world is shut."

Who has not felt the tranquilizing influence of the Sabbath-morn? Nature seems to sympathize with the moral associations of the scene. On other days, her voice is almost drowned amid the din and bustle of the world; but when the wheels of mammon's car are arrested, and their thunder is not heard, then comes forth her soothing language, which falls on the heart like æolian music, to subdue its passions and to awaken its finer sensibilities. The voice of nature is the voice of God. He who speaks in the sanctuary, of redemption by the blood of Jesus, speaks, from the hush and fragrance of the morning, of the vast and varied gifts of his providence. To commune with nature and with God, we must imitate David and awake early.

The resurrection of Jesus took place before the dawn. Ere the sun was up, one of his faithful followers repaired to the sepulchre. She came in the morning twilight to look upon the tomb of Jesus. She found it unsealed and empty, and wondered what had become of her Lord. As she wept, a voice addressed her, at first in a stranger's accents—lest, under the excitement, a too sudden revelation might overpower her mind—then that voice was changed, and the well remembered tones told her that it was indeed her risen master. Did Mary find her Redeemer at early dawn; and shall we presume to expect his presence if we doze away in guilty slumbers, this portion of sacred time?

No, let us rather fly to the sepulchre, and see amid the shadows of the morning the breaking beams of the Sun of righteousness. Let us gather the spiritual manna before the sun is up, and feed upon it, ere we refresh ourselves on the food that perisheth. Few would complain of dull Sabbaths, or wandering thoughts, or tedious services, were they to secure, for the purposes of private devotion, the morning of the Sabbath. A sacred impulse would thus be obtained which, like a favoring gale, would waft the soul onward to its rest.

Reader, until you value and improve the Sabbath morning, you need not expect to experience the full advantages of this blessed day. If, on other days, you can wake early to serve the world, and on *this*, you take the liberty to indulge the flesh, be assured the Sabbath will not ordinarily prove to you a delight, nor will it close upon you with peace and with edification.

CHAPTER IV.

PRIVATE AND FAMILY DEVOTIONS.

The secular part of the week is occupied almost entirely in attention to the business of the world. Much prayer should be mingled with these earthly engagements, in order to counteract their naturally seductive influence upon the soul. When the Sabbath comes, a new class of duties demands attention. Then the business of the world is to be laid aside altogether; whilst direct acts of worship are to be performed requiring sincerity, faith, humility, and holy zeal. The soul is to divest itself of its temporal burdens,

and to rise into a purer atmosphere, where it may commune with God and anticipate the joys of heaven. How needful then, that every Christian should be faithful in the devotional duties of the Sabbath! The private altar must then have its full share of attention. It is vain to expect a profitable attendance upon the public services of the day, if secret prayer be neglected, or if a stinted measure of time be allowed for its performance. Let the remarks already made on early rising be attended to, and there will be no curtailment of this duty; but if sensual indulgence, or decoration of the body absorb the earlier portions of the day, the closet will be robbed of its claims, and the soul will lose the full benefit of the instructions of the sanctuary.

On the morning of the Sabbath, there should be nothing like hurry or distraction of mind. There is time surely for a calm and serious attention to every duty and engagement.

Private prayer, on the Sabbath, will naturally have respect to the day and its privileges. The soul will also take into view the events of the past week—joyous or sad—and will be employed in giving thanks for the divine goodness, or in humbling itself under the adversities of life. "How many blessings"—will be the suggestion of the pious heart—"have been poured upon me and upon mine during the past week! Sweet sleep has visited my eyelids. The bounties of a generous Providence have been provided to regale my senses and to nourish my body. Others have died; but I am among the living. Hundreds have been overtaken by distressing calamities; and some have been hurried without a moment's warning, into the presence of their Judge; whilst I have dwelt safely under the shadow of the Almighty! Bless the Lord then, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Or if it has pleased God to make

the past week a season of affliction, the soul, on the return of this day of rest, may repair to the throne of grace with all its burdens, and find there the consolation which it needs. Prayer will then take the form of confession and of humiliation in view of the deserved rebuke of heaven for personal or domestic sins; and it may thus become the soothing medium of God's mercy to the broken in heart.

Every member of the family should be allowed time and opportunity for secret prayer. Let the duty be inculcated even on young children; and let them understand that their Sabbath morning devotions should not only be attended to, but that they should be appropriate. Are you a parent, take the child on your knee or call it to your side, and affectionately remind it of the design and obligations of the Sabbath. Bid it pray with reference to Sabbath privileges and duties; or if its inexperienced mind cannot frame a prayer for itself, be *thou* its mouth to God, and thus impress its tender heart with your own sense of obligation to the divine command. Delightful spectacle! to see a whole family greeting the return of holy rest with gladness of heart, and each one employed, at an early hour, in supplicating the divine presence!

On the Sabbath, there should be some special effort to excite an interest in the family devotions. Instead of being conducted in the usual manner, some variety might be introduced—as the singing of an appropriate hymn, or propounding a few questions bearing on the duties of the day. The portion of Scripture read might also be appropriate, and a few remarks serving to fix the attention upon it might be profitably made. The family altar should, on this morning, send up a flame of augmented purity and brightness. Every thing proper and allowable should be done, to make this part of the Sabbath service interesting

and profitable to the household. Where there are children and dependents, the family worship should be conducted so as to interest without wearying the mind. There may be a hurried brevity which savors of insincerity or of irreverence; and on the other hand, the exercises may be so prolonged and spiritless as to make them burdensome. Between these extremes, there is a happy medium, which piety and good sense will be likely to adopt, and which will make the hour of family devotion to be anticipated with pleasure.

By an attention to the duties of the closet—which are supposed to precede the assembling of the family for social worship, the heart will ordinarily be prepared to enter with warmth of feeling into the latter service. Each one bringing his separate coal, glowing from the private altar, will add a portion of pious interest; and the worship of the family will thus be a delightful preparation for the more public services of the sanctuary.

But alas! how few families are there, who answer to this description? In many households, there is found a sad contrast, in the late hour of rising—the hurried and distracting scene of preparation for public worship; in which the effort is, not to dress the soul, but to decorate the body; not to provide spiritual but carnal food; and where *little* if any time is allotted to private or family devotions. Why should such complain of dull Sabbaths, or of uninteresting sermons? The cause of such complaints may be found in their want of such preparation as we have recommended, for the services of the day; and so long as this neglect is chargeable upon them, they need not expect to reap the full benefit of so precious a privilege.

CHAPTER V.

SABBATH PRIVILEGES; HEARING THE WORD, ETC.

Said our Lord to his disciples, "take heed how ye hear." The caution is as necessary now as when it was first uttered. If what we hear in the sanctuary is the simple truth as it is in Jesus; we should be just as careful to understand and to obey it, as if it fell for the first time from the lips of the great Teacher.

The fact that the treasure is committed to earthen vessels, abates not its intrinsic value. The costly pearl is found enclosed in a rough and worthless shell. Why then should we neglect the pearl of great price, simply because it happens to be lodged in an earthen casket?

Happy art thou, reader, if having learned to estimate aright the privileges of the Sabbath, thou hast a heart to relish the spiritual provision which it affords. On the supposition that this is the case; and that Providence has placed you where the church going bell is heard; and where you are regularly invited to sit under the droppings of the sanctuary; still, you may need the admonition, "take heed how ye hear."

Let it be first *with gratitude for the privilege.* Think of the millions and hundreds of millions who are in pagan darkness. To them no Sabbath comes. No resurrection-morn greets their benighted eyes. They dwell in the valley of dry bones and amid the habitations of cruelty. "Who hath made us to differ?" Let us then be employed in devout thanksgivings as we tread the courts of the Lord and listen to the messages of his grace. Let us give good heed to the word, remembering that our responsibility

is proportioned to our privileges; "for to whomsoever much is given, of him will much be required." Grateful ourselves for the blessings of the gospel, let us compassionate those who are destitute; and let us so improve our day of grace that the heathen may not rise up in the judgment to condemn us.

We should endeavor to listen to the word of God *with fixed and solemn attention.* The respect due to a subject is great in proportion to its importance. Hence the word of God claims, from every accountable sinner, the most profound respect. None can make light of it without incurring incalculable guilt. Other subjects we may treat with levity and only expose ourselves to the charge of ignorance or of folly; but here, if we presume to exhibit irreverence or neglect, we shall draw down upon our souls the wrath of God. How seldom does the hearer of the gospel reflect upon the responsibility of his position! How many careless hearers of the word are there in every congregation! With no preparation in secret, they come to the sanctuary as to a place of ordinary resort. You may see, by their light and irreverent carriage, that they have no fear of God before their eyes. Be the subject of discourse what it may —whether alarming or alluring; whether it speak in fearful tones of the judgment, or touch upon the tender theme of a Savior's dying compassion—in neither case does it gain their ear or rivet their attention. Their heart, to these momentous themes, is cold; and their eye is wandering, like the fool's, to the ends of the earth. Some may imagine, there is no sin in all this; but be assured, reader, if such be thy impression, thou art greatly deceived. A conduct thus irreverent is making light of the gospel. It is casting practical contempt upon God. It is desecrating the Sabbath and the sanctuary. Remember whose voice it is,

thou art refusing to hear. When God speaks in the thunder-cloud, thou canst feel the solemnity of the appeal. Is it not the same voice that warns and invites you in the sanctuary? Why then should you tremble in the one case and smile or despise in the other? It is the same voice that will summon your spirit into eternity, and pronounce upon you the irrevocable verdict. Listen then with fixed and serious attention to the voice of God in the gospel.

In the parable of the sower, "he that heareth the word and *understandeth* it," is pronounced the profited hearer. How *can* we understand, if the attention be not fixed, or when the obtrusive world is allowed to come into the sanctuary with us; or when we have no inward conviction of the solemnity and importance of the subject?

I trust that some, who read these pages—especially such as "have tasted of the good word of God"—will so attend to the preparation of the heart for divine worship as to enable them to worship God "in spirit and in truth." Carry into his sacred courts, dear reader, a heart tenderly alive to the importance of the privilege, thirsting for the waters of life, and disposed to "receive with meekness the engrafted word." Say to the world, with all its cares and pleasures, "stay thou here, whilst I go yonder and worship." As you enter the sanctuary, remember, that it "is none other but the house of God and the gate of heaven." When engaging in the devotional part of the service, endeavor to throw your whole soul into the act. Pray with the spirit, and sing with the spirit. When the minister says, "let *us* pray," he invites the entire congregation to accompany him. Every heart should beat in unison. It is direct dishonor to God, to refuse to unite, or to gaze idly abroad over the sanctuary. Nor is there less disrespect towards the appointed worship of God, in declining a participation

in the praises of his house; in treating that important part of devotion as a mere exhibition of musical skill; or—what is alas, but too common—in mocking high Heaven, with "solemn sounds upon a thoughtless tongue." Every *heart* is bound to sing, even if the voice cannot, in proper measures, give audible expression to its feelings. If "the burden of a sigh or the falling of a tear," as Montgomery has beautifully expressed it, is genuine prayer; so, the silent aspiration of a grateful heart must be acceptable praise. *This* every worshipper *can* render; and this he is bound to render to him who will be worshipped "in spirit and in truth." Alas, how prevalent, even among professors, is the sin of "honoring God with the lips, whilst the *heart* is far from him!" From this sin, every worshipper should constantly pray, "O Lord deliver us."

We should listen to the divine word, not only with fixed and serious attention, but also *with impartiality.* By impartiality I mean, without prejudice as it respects the truth itself; or as to the medium through which the truth is conveyed.

It is not to be denied, that the gospel has some features which are repugnant to our carnal nature; and that it uses language often which falls harshly on "ears polite." But the repulsive features of divine truth are as important to be uttered as those which are more soothing and attractive. The considerations which it addresses to our fears—applied by the Spirit of God—move the soul to a conviction of its danger, and impel it to seek shelter from the wrath divine. It is thus that the Spirit "convinces the world of sin, and of judgment." But some cannot bear to hear from the pulpit the words "hell and damnation," even when they know them to be bible-terms; and know also, that they have as fearful an application to the wicked now, as they

had when Christ and his apostles uttered them. These, and words of kindred import, may, I am aware, be indiscreetly employed; or—which is alas, sometimes the case—may be hurled on the heads of the congregation with an air more of defiance than of compassion; but the hearer must not object to the terms themselves; nor turn away from the faithful ambassador who solemnly announces them. As a part of God's word, they speak with prophetic certainty of the doom of impenitent men. However alarming, they should be listened to. Prejudice may close the ear against them; or a fastidious self-love may find fault with them; but truth is truth, and nothing but submission to its dictates can avail to mitigate or to avert its terrors.

There are other parts of the gospel, such as its self-denial—the renunciation of the world—the doctrine of sovereign grace—which war so directly against what is evil in man, that under their presentation, his pride and selfishness are often offended. Selfish and impenitent men will not sit easy when such themes are discussed. Some would have the minister cry, "peace, peace; when there is no peace." The cavilling hearer cannot be a profited hearer. In order to be benefited, we must listen to the gospel with candor. Instead of thrusting away the faithful servant, or withdrawing from his ministry, on account of the fidelity with which he presses upon us the truth, we should imitate the noble and unprejudiced Bereans, and "search the Scriptures, whether those things are so."

Nor should we allow prejudice toward the medium, through which the truth comes, to keep us from hearing it; or when hearing, to close the mind against its influence. Every minister cannot be, in talent and zeal, a Paul, nor in eloquence, an Apollos. The majority of spiritual teachers must necessarily be men of moderate mental en-

dowments, or the world would perish for want of the bread of life. In the work of the ministry, the graces of elocution are desirable, but not indispensable. *Great* talents—be it remembered—are, in every profession, of infrequent occurrence. Where there is one Boerhaave, there are a thousand practitioners of barely respectable pretensions. In philosophy, a Newton and a Bacon are lights of a single age; and the law can point to but here and there one, who commands general admiration. But shall the sick man reject the healing medicine because not tendered to him by an eminent hand; or do men suffer their property or their character to be in jeopardy because they cannot obtain the most learned counsel? Why should there then be so much fastidiousness in relation to the ministry; especially when it has this advantage over other professions, that its truths are so pure and so grand, as to need no auxiliary interest from the human vehicle through which they pass? A truly good man, with good common sense, is probably better adapted to the ministry than a brilliant genius. By the former, truth will be exhibited in its native simplicity; whilst the latter may, even unconsciously, excite more admiration towards himself, than interest in the message. A hungry man will relish substantial food; nor will he object, if it come to him in a clean though coarse vessel. The morbid appetite, on the contrary, craves a stimulating diet; and the fastidious palate must be coaxed by luxuries presented on furbished silver.

There is prevalent too much of the latter taste with respect to the ministry. Plain, substantial truth—especially when employed in exhibiting the doctrines of the gospel—is, by many congregations, considered dry and uninteresting; whilst noisy declamation, or exciting appeals, or endless illustration is greatly admired.

One man will conceive a prejudice towards a minister on the ground of deficiency in talent; another, for the want of a good elocution; another, from slight indiscretion of word or conduct; and others again, from causes which it would be impossible or improper to mention. This prejudice, once fixed, seems to be considered as a sufficient apology for non-attendance on the ministry, or for a total lack of interest in the truths which are announced. I would not be too severe on the hearer; nor would I, in a spirit of official jealousy, excuse the faults of the profession to which it is my privilege to belong. Indolence in the ministry, is inexcusable. The preacher is not to blame for want of talent; but he *is* to blame, if he neglect to render what talent he possesses as available as possible. Nor ought we to claim for any individual of the profession, an apology, for not having "a good report of them that are without." "A bishop must be blameless." Moral purity must be stamped on his deportment. His errors must be those of the heart; known only to God and to his own sorrowing spirit. But if prejudice exist on the ground of want of talent, or of plainness of manner, or of fidelity in presenting the gospel, the reader should be reminded that such prejudice is wrong; and if indulged, will deprive the soul of the sanctifying influence of truth.

Our obligations to improve the day of rest, and to grow in grace and in knowledge, are irrespective of all such prejudice. To the sanctuary we are bound to go with a devout spirit, and there we are bound to hear what God shall speak to us. Let the truth come down upon us with even terrific force; we should bare our bosom to the blow; and whosoever may present it—if he be a man of God, and speak according to the divine testimony—let us endeavor to fix the

mind impartially on the message, nor allow a depraved prejudice to rise, like a noxious exhalation, and obscure the proportions of heavenly truth.

CHAPTER VI.

SELF-APPLICATION OF THE TRUTH.

It is too common to listen to the preacher as a medium simply of intellectual gratification. The great themes which he presents are viewed as mere topics on which the eloquent discourse may be reared. Familiar from childhood with the doctrines and general precepts of the gospel, we are apt to lose a proper sense of the solemn personal bearing which they at all times possess; and hence the slight impression which is ordinarily made by their presentation. How common is it, after public service, to hear one and another inquiring, with scarcely serious expression of countenance, how the discourse was liked? and whether the hearer was *pleased*, not whether he was convinced or edified?

Unless the Holy Spirit, in a peculiar and powerful manner, be present to over-awe and impress the audience with divine truth, there will be but little personal application of the gospel. How can a soul be savingly instructed and blessed, where the sacred message is treated as the occasion of mere pleasurable excitement? A fine voice may fall agreeably on the ear; a graceful gesture may please the eye; powerful logic or a brilliant fancy may gratify or captivate the mind; and thus the gospel may be tolerated for the sake of these pleasing accompaniments. Let us

not, however, mistake mental gratification for love of the truth, nor suppose, that with such feelings as we have described, the word will prove to us, "a savor of life unto life."

But in most instances, the preacher has few or none of these rare and attractive qualifications. He is simply a plain and faithful steward of the mysteries of the gospel. Under such circumstances, many take the liberty to undervalue his labors; and though complimenting him, it may be, by their presence, they feel under no special obligation to take the message home to their hearts. If the minister is eloquent, admiration of the man seems to cancel the guilt of the neglect of the message. If he is *not* eloquent, his want of popularity is considered as a sufficient excuse for drowsiness and inattention. There is but here and there one who realizes in the sanctuary that God is speaking to *him*. Few there are, who are more intent on the truth itself, than on the manner in which it is conveyed to them. But let us remember, when we go into the house of God, it is to hear the *word of God*. It is not for the sake of being pleased with a fine voice, or an eloquent delivery; it is not to while away an hour which might otherwise hang heavy on our hands; it is not to see and to *be* seen; nor is it for the sake merely of preserving a good reputation. We go to hear what God will speak to *us;* and we are bound therefore to listen to the solemn message, as a message of God *unto us*. Let us individualize ourselves, and feel as we should feel, if we were the only persons in the sanctuary. Let us, in imagination, be alone with the preacher; and let every word which is spoken be to us, as the still small voice of God to Elijah on the mount of audience.

We are very apt also, under the blinding influence of

self-love or personal vanity, to listen for others—to put over the pungent appeal upon our fellow-worshipper, to whose case we judge it far more applicable than to our own. So easy is it to perceive "the mote in our brother's eye," whilst blind to "the beam that is in our own," that it is not uncommon, to repel the application of truth, even when it touches a besetting sin, and to busy ourselves in fitting it to others, whom we view as far more guilty than ourselves. If the preacher be discriminating in his delineations of character, the congregation may be found on the alert to discover the personal mark at which he is supposed to aim. Each one will seem to be unconscious that his *own* bosom is exposed, whilst wondering how his neighbor can bear up under the rankling arrow.

This practice of hearing for others, whilst it argues great self-ignorance with respect to our own character, operates at the same time, as an obstruction to our personal improvement under the gospel. Let us then remember, that in order to a profitable attendance upon the sanctuary, we must forget, so far as possible, the presence of others; that we must take neither a sympathetic nor a censorious oversight of their faults; but must hear for ourselves, receiving home into our own bosoms, the warning or the reproof which is administered. If we allow conscience to speak, we shall often hear its direct and pointed appeal, in the words of the prophet, "thou art the man." Be the truth never so mortifying, if it apply to our own case, let us admit it. Be it never so humbling, if *true*, let us bow under it. We should love the preacher who probes our disordered nature with a keen and searching knife. Let us not seek for external fomentations and emollients, when the malady lies deep within. Our self-knowledge should teach us, that no representations of our character can be too humbling, no alarms too rousing.

We should carry our sin-defiled souls to the sanctuary for this very purpose, viz. to have them smitten by the power of divine truth; and we should love the man or the matter, that seizes as with a giant grasp our sins; that flings us on our face before God—that covers us with shame—pierces us with a sense of guilt, and leaves us even bleeding and groaning in anguish. "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head.

In hearing the word, we should have the spirit of children. There should be no arrogance—no over-weening opinion of our own importance—no cavilling—no shrinking. We should open our bosom and invite the blow; remembering, that truth must first kill, before she can make alive; and that, unless her arrow tipt with anguish touch the heart, the hand of Jesus will not apply the balm of mercy to the soul.

CHAPTER VII.

PRAYER UPON THE WORD.

In order to a profitable attendance upon the sanctuary, the gospel must be heard not only with self-application, but in a spirit of prayer.

Having considered the importance of prayer as a means of preparation for the more public services of the sacred day; let us carry this spirit of prayer into the house of God, and breathe it forth in every part of the worship. Especially should we send up our aspirations for heaven's blessing on the preached word. We are sanctified by the

word of God and by prayer; but especially by prayer *upon* the word of God. It is not placing ourselves around the porches of Bethesda, that will effect the cure of our disordered souls. It is necessary also to invoke the angel of mercy to come down and trouble the waters: or better still, to raise the cry to Jesus, as he passes by, and implore his aid in our behalf.

Can we expect to reap the advantages of public preaching in our own growth in grace, unless we mingle prayer with what we hear? We suppose that the word, of itself, will not reach and rectify the heart. It is not in the power of the preacher—orthodox and eloquent though he may be—to beat down one besetting sin, or to implant one christian grace. Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but God alone can give the increase. To this sentiment all Christians subscribe. Who, therefore, will deny the necessity of looking directly to God for his blessing upon the preaching of the word? What time is more important, as a season of prayer, than when we go into the very audience-chamber of the King, and listen to His commands and counsels? *Then*, if ever, should we press our suit, and there should we invoke his promised Spirit to give light and healing to the soul. As the preacher opens the inspired volume, and announces the text, our thoughts should at once ascend to God that the Holy Spirit may touch the lips of the speaker, and open all hearts to receive the truth in the love of it. As he proceeds to unfold the solemn topic, and to apply it to his audience, our souls should be beating with intense desire towards God for his quickening grace.

This spirit of prayer upon the dispensation of the word is called for, not only in our own behalf as Christians, but also in behalf of impenitent and careless souls in the congregation. It is known, that where the Holy Spirit is ope-

rating with power, and men are awake to a sense of their responsibilities, Christians practice much of this silent and ejaculatory supplication, not only on their own account but for the awakened and unawakened in the midst of them. Then do they acknowledge practically the connection between prayer and the effectual application of the gospel. They come into the sanctuary burdened with the consideration that souls are perishing in sin. They know and feel that nothing but divine truth made effectual by the Holy Spirit can awaken and save them. With suppressed agony they look towardst he mercy-seat: and every word of the preacher, which is adapted to convince or to awaken, is caught from his lips, and impelled by the breath of prayer, in the hope that it may reach the slumbering conscience, and be, to the sinner, the power of God unto salvation. How many beating anxious hearts are to be found in a congregation where the Holy Spirit is doing his work of saving grace! How rapidly, under such circumstances, do Christians ripen for heaven! How are the careless over-awed, and the hardened brought to repentance! Oh, what power is there in fervent prayer! Let it be offered, not only on *some* occasions, but on *all* occasions. Let it be, not only when there is a revival, but *whenever* and *wherever* the gospel is dispensed. Never will truth have its full and destined sway over the heart, until it is heard, not as an exhibition, but a saving medium; rendered such by the power of God in answer to prayer. As when Moses, flanked by his venerable colleagues, sat on the overlooking mount and held up his hands unto God, whilst the armies of Israel were in conflict with Amalek; so must Christians lift up their untiring hearts in prayer when the sword of the Spirit is unsheathed, and truth is in conflict with the opposing heart. And as certainly as the extended

hands of the patriarch gave evidence of the triumph of Israel, so certainly will the effectual and fervent prayers of Christians, now in the sanctuary and under the preaching of the word, be followed by the conviction of sinners and the success of the gospel.

To profit under the means of grace, we *must* be in the spirit of prayer. There must be prayer before we enter the sanctuary; prayer whilst in it, and prayer when we retire from the sanctuary. Where this is not, there will be but little edification. There may be much talk about the preacher and the sermon —many refined criticisms on the manner and the matter—much eulogy or much condemnation; but there will be, I repeat, but little spiritual benefit. We are bound to "be doers of the word:" and such we shall not be, if we are not in the spirit of prayer. Would you look for the "doer of the word," you will find him in his closet before he is in the sanctuary; and when *in* the sanctuary, could you look into his bosom, you would see his soul rising in holy aspirations for a blessing on the word. When he retires, he goes not to the convivial circle, nor to pleasure's gay banquet; he seeks not the noise and bustle of the world; no, he goes to the still consecrated spot: there he meditates, and there he prays. He bears to the mercy-seat the souls of the thoughtless, and the burdens of the disconsolate. He opens his heart in ingenuous confession, and bows it in deepest humility. There he groans and agonizes until the good seed of the word is deeply infixed and watered by the Spirit's influence: so that instead of losing the blessing, like "the way-side hearer," he brings forth fruit, "thirty, sixty, and an hundred fold."

CHAPTER VIII.

COMMUNION SABBATH.

If to the christian mind, the ordinary Sabbath brings with it a soothing and refreshing influence, how the interest deepens, when the season of holy communion at the Lord's table arrives! Then is prepared a more than common repast. The King of Zion spreads his feast of love and mercy, and sends forth the invitation to every humble guest, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price."

There is nothing so much like heaven as the Communion Sabbath. Not only does it shadow forth the "rest that remaineth," but it strikingly typifies one of the celestial employments of the redeemed; viz. that act of holy fellowship represented in the vision of St. John under the figure of the "marriage supper of the Lamb." Christians on this occasion come together to acknowledge their obligations to Jesus their common head—to obey his dying command—to sit as it were at his feet—to eat and drink the memorials of his dying love. Something visible and tangible is here given to assist their weak faith, and to awaken their holy affections. On other occasions the mind may be called to exercise a more rigidly abstract faith—to contemplate truth in its naked severity and simplicity; but here abstractions give place to something more like substance; and the soul is called to contemplate the love of a divine Redeemer, manifested by visible symbols, appealing through the senses to the heart.

What Christian can listen to the announcement of such

a privilege and not feel at once the solemnity of the call? Is there not something which seems to say, "prepare to meet thy God?" Do we not in an instant begin to look at our responsible position as members of the church of Christ? The voice of the Bridegroom is heard in this invitation; and something seems to say, "go ye out to meet him." The soul begins to unloose its earthly burdens—to turn off its attention from topics of transient interest, and to cast a glance towards Calvary. The wedding garment is thought of; and the anxiety begins to be felt for spiritual preparation: and indeed such preparation is all-important.

"Soul, for the marriage feast,
Robe and prepare;
Holiness becomes each guest,
Jesus is there."

But we will suppose the day to have arrived. Dawns there upon earth a brighter morning, or one more calm, and soothing, than that which ushers in the Communion Sabbath? If the soul has been where duty has called it; if it has sat in judgment on itself—tested its claims to a participation of the feast—humbled itself for past sins—divested itself, by the help of divine grace, of earthly cares—gone down into the valley of humility, and, as Bunyan says, kissed the lowly flowers there; if it has caught a view by faith of Jesus, and felt some new impulses of love and gratitude; O then, the early dawn of this day will seem like the first faint rays of heaven. Has it not often so appeared to the humble believer? Has he not felt as if he was almost on the threshold of a blissful eternity?

The hour arrives, when with kindred minds he surrounds the precious board, and thinks only of him "who loved us and gave himself to die for us." That deep solemnity,

amid which the voice of God's servant is heard speaking of Jesus and his matchless love—that broken bread, O touching emblem of the broken body,—the tear of penitence, gathering in many an eye—the breathing petitions, which, though mere aspirations of the soul, may almost be heard amid the silence—the promised, yea *realized* presence of the Master, the heart carried back to Calvary, to bleed with its bleeding Lord; all declare, that this is the very "gate of heaven."

So important a season for spiritual communion seems to demand a few additional remarks, with a view to assist the communicant in a practical improvement of it.

One point of great importance undoubtedly is, to understand the nature and design of the supper.

It was instituted by our Savior on that night in which he was betrayed. The darkest hour is at hand. The tremendous crisis comes, when to all his other sufferings, must be added the hidings of the Father's face, and this too amid the death-pangs of the cross. But god-like in benevolence, he seems to lose sight of his *own* sorrows, in pity for his dejected followers; and he turns to comfort them, when all consolation, save that of submission, is leaving his own bosom. He desires to eat the passover with them before he suffers. Wonderful coincidence! The typical Lamb is in close proximity to Calvary's victim. The shadow and the substance are almost conjoined. There on the table lies the type; and there *at* the table is the typified. The wrath of God that fell on Egypt, fell not where the mark of innocent blood was seen; and the wrath that shall fall on the unbelieving, will touch no soul that bears the mark of "rich atoning blood." In the place of the passover then, comes the sacred supper, and instead of looking back to Egypt, we are required to look back to

Calvary. Hence by a very natural transition, our Lord changed this typical and Jewish into a symbolical and christian feast. He puts the bread and the cup in place of the Lamb and the bitter herbs; and says, breaking the bread, "this is my body which is broken for you," and "this cup is the New Testament in my blood which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." By these expressions, our Savior presents the idea of his death as a vicarious, i. e. substituted offering for sin. The bread is the body, or to represent the body of Jesus broken for us; and the wine is to represent his blood shed for our remission. This is in accordance with Isaiah, who says, "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." And again, "the Lord hath laid upon *Him* the iniquity of us all." Any view therefore of this ordinance which does not include, nay even make *prominent* the fact, that Jesus our Savior died as a delegated victim—a voluntary offering for sin—does not coincide with Scripture, nor apprehend the nature and design of the Supper.

The communicant who understands the subject considers himself as the guilty—the condemned—the lost. Die he must eternally, if dealt with according to his sins. But when he approaches the table he sees in those symbols that which affords ground of hope. His faith seizes on "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Here the innocent suffers, and the guilty is pardoned. Jesus takes the sinner's place, and by sufferings voluntarily borne for him, procures his forgiveness and secures his final preparation for heaven.

The sacrament of the Supper is designed to keep in view this grand truth of the atonement. It speaks not only of Jesus, but of Jesus the sufferer. It points not only to his broken body and shed blood, but to the fact that by these

he purchased our redemption. Away with the notion then that He was only a martyr to the truth! Every time this table is spread, it speaks a refutation of that icy creed; which first plucks from our Emmanuel the crown of divinity, and makes his blood of no more value, as a sin-offering, than that of the brute beast, which had so long typified its saving virtue.

This ordinance was instituted also as a perpetual memorial of our Lord.

It was intended to bring his character and mediatorial work frequently before the mind, in order to keep alive within us a sense of obligation, and to impel us forward in the path to heaven. "This do," said Jesus, "in *remembrance* of me." What wisdom and compassion are here! The Savior provides through all future time this precious antidote to the lingering infirmities of his followers. Alas, that we should ever forget, or even seem to forget that dying love! Yet amid the pressure of earthly cares, and the ever present allurements of the world, our deceitful hearts are prone to lose sight of the cross. A thousand objects intervene between us and our Savior. We seem to want some strong sensible ligature to bind our affections to Calvary; or if for a season, we are driven down the current of this world's affairs, we need a counter-current or some favoring breeze to set us back again to the port of peace. Here we have it. In this sweet memorial we have what is all-important in keeping us closely united to Jesus, or if we have grown cold in his service, the blessed communion awakens our affections and kindles up our flagging zeal.

Disciple of Jesus, art thou now anticipating an approach to the table, and asking how thou shalt dispose thy thoughts most appropriately, and on what thou shalt principally fix the attention? The reply is simply, "Do this in remem-

brance of me." Turn thine eyes towards Calvary. Go, in thought, to the garden of agony. Draw nearer even than the three slumbering disciples. Advance to the blood-bedewed spot where lies the sufferer. Behold the cup which he drinks. Oh it is a more bitter draught than ever touched the mortal lip. His tears, his groans, his sorrow "even unto death," tell us through what he is passing for our redemption. The command of Jesus is, "let us rise and go hence." But where shall we go? Alas, from one deep scene of wo, to another still deeper. We must see our Savior bound and dragged by a ruthless band to the bar of Pilate. We must witness the insult, the mockery, the ruffian blows, the scourging, the crown of thorns, the purple robe. Meek Lamb of God, was there "ever sorrow like unto thine?" But the cross! This is the climax; and his murderers are not satisfied until they see him writhing upon it in the agonies of death. Oh that awful hour of darkness and desolation! But there is a little band who cling to him even here. They press through the rude soldiery, to catch his last look and to hear his last cry. Let us mingle with them to share their sorrows and their love. Equally interested are *we* in that scene of suffering. That precious blood flows for *us*, no less than for *them*. Those dying words "it is finished," speak of a redemption in which all Christ's followers are included.

Such are some of the thoughts, which would naturally be suggested on this deeply solemn occasion. They are thoughts which the believer loves to cherish; and which have a tendency to impress him with the odiousness of sin, and the compassion of Jesus in expiating it.

Let the communicant then investigate his claim to a seat at this table; since, "not every one that saith, Lord, Lord;" nor every one who "eateth and drinketh in his presence,

shall enter into the kingdom of God." Examine thyself, invited guest. Inquire if all sin is hated and resisted—especially as having caused the death of God's dear Son; if holiness is thy great aim; if thy happiness is found not in the world, but in God; if the duties of devotion are not a burden but a pleasure; if you love the brethren, and those most who are most like Christ; if you are penitent; if the presence of sin, even in *thought* is painful; if, with a deep conviction of your own entire sinfulness, you cast away all dependence on your own works, and trust for salvation *alone* on Christ and him crucified; if Jesus is precious; precious in his character, precious in his promises; *so* precious, that you can heartily forsake all to follow him?

If, to these inquiries, you can humbly reply in the affirmative, you are a welcome guest, whatever your own fears or Satan may suggest to the contrary. Yes, you *are* a welcome guest; and after having communed with your Lord on earth, you shall be admitted to the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven.

CHAPTER IX.

MEDITATION AND READING.

Among the duties which claim our attention on the Sabbath, may be named meditation and devotional reading.

The day of rest is well adapted to those exercises, and seems, in the suspension of our earthly cares, seriously to invite the soul to their performance. Throughout the secular part of the week, there occur but few intervals of leisure; and even the Christian, especially if he be obliged to toil

for his daily bread, finds it difficult to command his thoughts away from pressing anxieties which respect the present life. How thankful then should he be, that God has allowed him one whole day of exemption from toil, in which he may, in some degree, forget his connections with earth, and think of his solemn relations to eternity. Let us make the most of these precious hours ; and taking to ourselves the wings of pious contemplation, let us soar away towards that final rest where cares and sorrows shall never come.

Having considered the spirit in which we should improve the public services of the sanctuary, I would invite the reader's attention to some duties, of a private nature, not yet mentioned, as appropriate to the Lord's day, among which I would place *meditation* as next in importance to secret prayer.

In all ages of the church, devout men have occupied themselves in pious meditation. The patriarch Isaac " went out at the even-tide to meditate." The Psalmist characterizes the happy man as one who meditates in the divine law day and night. Of his own devout exercises, he says, " my meditation of him shall be sweet ;" and again, " I love thy law, it is my meditation all the day." Paul expressly enjoins upon Timothy this duty. " Meditate," says he, " upon these things." Saints in modern times, who have been distinguished for their rapid advances in holiness, have addicted themselves greatly to this duty. David Brainerd was often occupied in profound meditation upon God and his holy word. His diary seems like one rapt vision of the soul. When his *lips* were silent, his *heart* was speaking to God in holy contemplation.

This duty requires some effort, and implies some degree of mental discipline. It is not as easy a thing to command the thoughts, as for the centurion to command his soldiers ;

saying to one go, and to another come, with the certainty of prompt obedience. Alas! the ever-present objects of sense —the earthly habits of mind—the power of remaining depravity, all stand opposed to meditation on spiritual themes, and make strenuous exertions necessary in order to accomplish it. But the effort must be made. The refractory mind must be reined back to the subject; and looking to God for help, we must strive to settle our undiverted thoughts upon his truth. Perseverance in this work will be rewarded by success; and a habit of holy contemplation once formed, the soul, by means of it, will advance rapidly in meetness for its final rest.

Meditation must, if possible, be the Christian's daily business. The Sabbath, at all events, should not pass without some excursions to the land of Beulah. The occurrences of the past week will ordinarily furnish a part of the subject-matter for pious contemplation. The mercies of God may be recalled to excite our gratitude. The disappointments and afflictions which have befallen us, may, by meditation, be made serviceable to the soul, in producing humility and trust. Each event of Providence should be noted in our spiritual diary—which, on this day should be carefully corrected, that we may understand our progress or retardation in the christian pilgrimage.

Having heard the word of God from his official servants, it is our duty also to meditate thereon, in order that we may inwardly digest the same, and thus reduce the principles of the gospel to practice. There is reason to fear a very general neglect on this point; and that by many, the gospel is listened to, more from custom, than as that word which is designed to make us "wise unto salvation." Even Christians may inadvertently become mere hearers. If they are provided with an acceptable pastor, whose discourses grati-

fy their taste—yes, even sometimes their *pride*—they may rest satisfied with the weekly entertainment, without seriously applying the mind to the truth, with a view to incorporate it into their daily habits. Is meditation habitual with Christians? Can the reader say, that he follows the public preaching of the word with serious and self-appropriating reflections? Or does the subject flit from the attention, like a pleasing or painful vision of the night, and leave nothing of its solemn reality on the soul? I have known some persons vastly pleased with a sermon, who could tell neither where the text was, nor how it was treated. How many professors even, will listen on the Sabbath to three discourses, and be at a loss, the succeeding day, if requested to give you a single striking thought or passage from either! Is it not evident in this case, that meditation is wanting; that the mind is merely passive; and that no more adheres to it than the unsolicited memory chooses to retain? How far is this from compliance with the apostle's direction to the Hebrews: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

In order then, to hear the word with profit, we must, by meditation and prayer, seize upon, and hold it fast, until the soul can take from it those divine impressions, which, through the Holy Spirit, it is intended to make. Yes, we *must* meditate upon the truth, or its impressions on the soul will be "but as the morning cloud and as the early dew." On the Sabbath, we have an appropriate season for this duty. No clamorous calls of earth are summoning away our attention. All is quiet and serene. The closet invites us to enter its sweet retreat. Let us from the public sanctuary repair to the private altar. Whatever may have been the subject of discourse, let us, by meditation, extract some-

thing from it for the good of the soul. Has it warned us against temptation? Let us ask our own hearts in what respects we need to be on our guard. Has it spoken of the advent of Jesus? How glorious a theme! Let us dwell upon it with rapture. Let our hearts echo the song heard by the grateful shepherds of Bethlehem. Has it called us to duties? Let us inquire wherein we have been deficient; and what we can yet do for the good of souls, and for the glory of God. Has it touched upon the resurrection? We may linger in thought around the sepulchre, until by faith we see our risen Lord. Has Calvary spoken? O let us dwell upon the dying love of Jesus, in pensive, grateful contemplation until that love shall constrain us to obedience. Have the glories of heaven been set before us? Let us, by meditation, retain the lovely vision, and ask, what claim we have on those unending joys? From the earthly Sabbath, we should ascend in contemplation to the eternal rest; and by keeping the bright reality in view, we should endeavor to increase our faith, and fire our zeal in the pursuit of it. What vast and glorious themes are spread before us! What a boundless field for the excursions of the soul! Here is the "valley of Baca;" and we may descend and breathe its fragrance, wafted to us from the sweet but lowly flowers which bloom around its waters. Here is Mount Pisgah, from whose shining summit we can descry the land of our hopes, in all its out-spread glories. Here are "green pastures" through which we may rove, and "still waters" along whose verdant banks we may wander. Yes, a more than earthly paradise is accessible to pious meditation. The soul may rise even to the dwelling-place of God, and commune with the scenes of a blissful eternity.

"Oft as this peaceful hour shall come,
Lord, raise my thoughts from earthly things;
And bear them to my heavenly home,
On faith and hope's celestial wings,—
'Till the last gleam of life decay,
In one eternal Sabbath day!"

Devotional Reading

With meditation we should connect devotional reading. There are intervals between the public services of the sanctuary which must be filled up profitably, or we may lose much of the good influence which the Sabbath is designed to have upon the soul.

Prayer we have placed first; next in importance is meditation; and not less useful perhaps is reading. The Bible is, of course, the first and principal book which should engage our attention. This is the fountain-head of spiritual knowledge. When we drink here, we are sure that the waters are unadulterated. However excellent other books may be, their value, as religious works, is only in proportion as they approach, in spirit and in principle, this divine standard. They are to the Bible what luminous objects are to the sun; they but reflect the light. Let us then place the word of God first; and, never may we fall so low in spiritual feeling, as to allow any other book to supersede it in our affections.

Other books however may profitably be read on the Sabbath; but the selection ought to be made with reference to their devotional and practical character. There is, at the present time, a vast number of religious books, which have a slightly serious aspect; but which tend to amuse the mind rather than to improve the heart. They seem to be graduated to a low scale of pious feeling, and to furnish an

apology for the neglect of what is strictly devotional. There are not a few popular works, which dress up truth in the garb of fiction: so that, in our humble apprehension, the brilliant drapery, whilst it dazzles and delights the eye, may conceal almost the pure and simple forms which it envelops.

But an important influence, in letting down the devotional character of the Sabbath, may come, I apprehend, from the semi-religious newspaper. This weekly visitor is received into almost every Christian family in our land. It comes to spend the Sabbath with us, and proposes to aid us in a profitable employment of the sacred hours. But is it not, in many instances, more secular than serious; more controversial than practical; and does it not set the mind afloat on a thousand novelties, from which it is next to impossible to recal it to holy contemplation? It is deeply to be regretted that, in some of these otherwise excellent papers, there has been a gradual descent from the high spiritual standard which was announced on their first publication. They have become but *semi*-religious, whilst secular intelligence is claiming column after column, and crowding out the all-important interests of piety. It becomes Christians to guard well this inlet to temptation; and if so large a portion of secular and controversial reading continues to characterize religious newspapers, it should be a serious question, whether they ought to be admitted as a part of our Sunday reading.

The "Saint's Everlasting Rest" is a book peculiarly well adapted to the sacred day. It treats of that rest of which the earthly Sabbath is a type or emblem. It is one of the holiest of uninspired works. The author composed it, he tells us, in view of death and of eternity. It breathes throughout a heavenly spirit; and it will, I doubt not, if

read with prayer and meditation, *infuse* a heavenly spirit. Next to the Bible there are no better books for the Sabbath than Baxter's practical and devotional writings. Addison says, "I once met with a page of Mr. Baxter; upon the perusal of it, I conceived so good an idea of the author's piety, that I bought the whole book;" and Dr. Johnson being asked by his friend, which of the works of Richard Baxter he should read; "Read any of them," said the sage, "for they are all good." Other authors might be named, such as Doddridge, Howe, Newton, Bunyan, Scott, Edwards, Flavel; all of whom have furnished food for the soul, on which, in the intervals of worship, it may feed and ruminate with profit. The rule in regard to Sabbath reading should be; not *controversial* but *practical*, not speculative but devotional works. On this day, every thing should tend to waft the soul onward to its rest.

The pious parent or head of a household should see that his family are provided with reading suited to the day of rest. Let only such books be perused as will deepen or confirm any serious impressions which, through the divine word and ordinances, may have been made upon the mind. Example will in this respect do a great deal. If the head of the family is seen to be conscientious in the selection of such authors as are practical and devotional, the children will not be likely to resort to light and unprofitable books.

I will conclude this chapter by a quotation from the devout Kempis. Of reading the Scriptures and other holy books, he says, "not eloquence, but truth is to be sought in the holy Scriptures; every part of which must be read with the same spirit by which it was written. In these and in all other books, it is improvement in holiness, not pleasure in the subtlety of thought or the accuracy of expression, that must principally be sought. We ought to regard those

parts that are simple and devout with the same delight as those of high speculation or profound erudition. Whatever book thou readest, let thy only motive to read be the love of truth; and instead of inquiring, who it is that writes, give all attention to the nature of what is written. Men pass away like the shadows of the morning, but the word of the Lord endureth forever; and that word, without respect of persons, in ways infinitely various speaketh unto all.

"The profitable reading of the holy Scriptures is frequently interrupted by a vain curiosity which prompts us to examine, discuss, and labor to comprehend those parts which should be meekly and submissively passed over. But to derive spiritual improvement from reading, we must read with humility, simplicity, and faith; and not affect the reputation of profound learning."

CHAPTER X.

CONVERSATION.

It is unbecoming in Christians at any time to indulge in "foolish conversation and jesting." Their discourse should always be for edification. Religion requires neither austerity nor a forced gravity. She authorizes and even enjoins her followers to be cheerful; and when she inculcates the duty of an edifying conversation, she should not be understood as proscribing or condemning all natural humor or lively sallies of the imagination.

On the Sabbath, pious cheerfulness or holy serenity of mind is peculiarly appropriate; and they will be exhibited

where the individual has a heart attuned to the duties of the day. And since, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, we may, in such a case, expect that "the conversation will be as it becometh the gospel of Christ."

Topics of discourse, which on other days, are innocent and proper, are neither proper nor edifying on *this* day. It is not the mere attendance upon divine institutions which God requires, when he says "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." This command forbids worldly conversation no less than secular employments. It requires abstinence from the subjects of ordinary discourse, and the employment of our tongue as well as our heart in things divine. The tongue is called by an apostle, "an unruly evil;" and he who "offends not in word" is considered a perfect man. But let the duties already enumerated be seriously attended to, and there will be but little difficulty in rightly employing the tongue. It is for the want of a devotional spirit that this member becomes unruly. It is because there is so much of the spirit of the world carried into the Sabbath, that we are tempted to vain discourse. "Make the tree good and its fruit will be good." "Keep the heart with all diligence;" and then from the mouth, the door of the heart, nothing will proceed "that defileth the man"

Every Christian knows how close is the connection between his feelings and the current of his discourse; and how easy and natural it is to have our conversation in heaven if our hearts are but there. So, on the other hand, if there be not a devotional spirit; if the heart has been absorbed in the world; how certainly will the conversation savor, even on the Sabbath, of the things which are "seen and temporal."

There is perhaps no one point on which Christians are more habitually deficient, *than in a conscientious abstinence*

on the Lord's day from all secular and unprofitable discourse. How few are found, who exhibit in this respect, an unblemished deportment! Is it impossible to keep in view the sacredness of the day, and so to order our conversation that it shall harmonize strictly with its holy design? Can we not make even a Sabbath-day's journey towards heaven, without like Lot's wife, casting a backward look to the city of destruction?

But we are very apt to tempt each other into the sin of Sabbath desecration. If an individual feels more than ordinarily disposed to muse on things divine; if pious thoughts are getting hold of the mind, and he seems to be rising into the region of holy contemplation, he is almost sure to meet with some one who will drag him back again to grovelling themes. Some person less affected with seriousness, or positively imbued with its opposite, will ask a question or throw in a remark calculated to drive away or to chill his devotional feelings.

Here, for example, is Gratus, who strives to keep his mind and tongue properly employed on the Lord's day; and in general he is quite successful. He has enjoyed many happy Sabbaths which have proved to him a foretaste of the eternal rest. At night he has been able to review the day's privileges with but few "compunctious visitings;" and he seeks his peaceful pillow with grateful recognition of the divine mercy. But his friend Lentus arrives and proposes to spend the Sabbath as a guest in his family. Now there is a wide difference between these two characters. The one is habitually serious, and aims, on the Sabbath especially, to grow in every christian grace and virtue. The other, as his name imports, is a careless professor, and he thinks more and talks more of the business of the world and of the news of the day, than of the things of relig-

ion. It is easy to see that Gratus and his guest will not strike the same chord on the Sabbath, however they may accord on other days. Lentus finds the constant recurrence of religious duties in the family of his friend an unpleasant draft upon his time, part of which he had hoped to spend in social relaxation, and in conversation not strictly serious. There is an awkwardness and constraint about him which show that he has not been accustomed to so scrupulous an observance of the day. He is constantly edging in some remark which savors of the world; or which, if replied to, must lead on the discourse to forbidden subjects. He is willing to talk *about* religion, but must be excused from any discourse touching upon christian experience, or which presses home upon the conscience, the obligations of the divine law.

How difficult is it, in such a man's company, to keep the discourse on profitable or even allowable themes. So Gratus finds it; and he is pained and surprised upon finding, that under the influence of politeness to his guest he is ever and anon sliding into conversation wholly irrelevant, and directly calculated to lead the mind away from God.

This is but one instance of that unprofitable kind of intercourse which may take place among professors of religion, where the tendency is to dishonor God, and to lose the advantages of the day of rest. How necessary that each one should guard well his thoughts and his speech; and how important—where there is a family—that its influential members should give such a tone to conversation as shall ensure a profitable or at least an innocent current of discourse! Much depends on the *head*. Let the father or mother look well to this point, for it is almost certain, that as *their* example and influence are, so will be the deportment of their household. By a little attention and forethought, they may secure this hallowed season from that

species of desecration which vain and worldly conversation brings, and may make it the occasion of permanent moral impressions.

The sin of Sabbath violation from worldly conversation is so prevalent, that it might be difficult to find, even among Christians, the man who should "cast the first stone." Our consciences however need to be apprised, that the commonness of a sin has no tendency to diminish its guilt; and if it be a fact that, in this respect, all are criminal, a general repentance and a general reformation ought instantly to ensue.

When the inhabitants of a country town meet at the village church, they should consider, that the object of their assembling is to honor God in the observance of his sacred institutions. In obedience to his command, they convene to hear his word dispensed; but in doing this, they have not discharged *all* their obligations. The law runs, "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Now if they make a convenience of this day, by appropriating the intervals of worship to mere secular conversation, they directly violate a divine precept. I make these remarks because it is sometimes the case, that the occasion of meeting at the house of God is seized upon as a good opportunity to inquire into the state of the crops; the prices of provisions; and, it is said, even to chaffer respecting cattle and produce.

It is sincerely to be regretted, if any professor of piety should have been guilty of thus turning the Lord's day into a day of merchandize. Should this prove to *be* the case in any instance; let that professor call to mind what the Savior said and did on a memorable occasion, in which a like guilt had been incurred. With holy indignation he entered the temple, and with a scourge of small cords,

drove out those who were engaged in merchandize, saying, "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves." Though we may not go to the length of actually exchanging commodities on this day, yet if, in the spirit of the world, we converse about such exchanges, we are guilty of desecrating the Sabbath, as truly as was the mercenary Jew of polluting the temple.

How much better on this holy day—when neighbors meet to worship God—to converse on appropriate themes! Let the discourse just preached be the topic of conversation; and inquire not merely how it was liked, but in what respects it may be practically improved. Let some portion of the interval be occupied in reading the Scriptures, in exhortation and in prayer. At all events, let not the world be the topic; nor let God be robbed of those hours which he has appropriated to himself; and for the abuse of which we must all account to him at his bar.

The merchant finds it difficult to keep his thoughts away from business on the Lord's day. He drives the trade with intensity of zeal for six days of the week. The impetus upon his soul is so great, that the Sabbath can scarcely arrest it. Hence he will be tempted to look at a price-current; or to catch any flying rumor of the fluctuations in trade; and more or less to converse on these topics; not so freely, it is true, as on other days, yet so as to make conscience mutter her note of disapprobation. How much Sabbath violation of this kind is practiced, I leave those to judge who are most conversant with the business of the world. Can a christian merchant reasonably expect to prosper, if he will not revere the command of Heaven? Let him take his stand against all Sabbath desecration. When he locks his store or office on Saturday evening, let

him lock his heart and mind against all earthly cares, and abstain in *word* as well as deed from violating the fourth commandment.

Politics is a fruitful source of Sabbath violation; not merely in the papers which are published on that day, and by public bulletins which invite the inspection of the citizens; but in thinking and in conversing about the persons and events connected with it. It is to be hoped that, whatever may be the practice of other men, *Christians* will not indulge in this sort of discourse on the Lord's day. There is perhaps no subject more exciting, nor any which is more constantly thrust upon the attention. Some pious men feel it to be their duty, as good citizens, to take an active part in this subject. We object not to this; yet we must say, if it be pursued with ardor, there is danger that the image of Cæsar may dim if not obliterate the image of God. But politics as a subject of thought and of conversation must be confined at least to the six secular days of the week. On the Sabbath we must "render unto God the things that are God's." The time is holy, and he has demanded of us its entire consecration to his service. Whatever therefore be our interest on the subject of politics, it must not be allowed to invade the day which is sacred by God's command, and which should be employed wholly in works of heavenly charity.

We might mention other topics of discourse which are apt to insinuate themselves, to our spiritual disadvantage; such as the current news of the town—conversation on personal character, savoring often of censoriousness—criticisms on the dress or appearance of our fellow worshippers—plans of business or of pleasure for succeeding days of the week; all of which, are directly adverse to our spiritual improvement, and are manifestly a breach of the

fourth commandment. There is surely time enough on other days for such conversation; and not too much time on the Sabbath for that which is strictly spiritual. The book of providence and of grace furnish noble and inexhaustible themes, not only for solitary reflection, but for social converse. The glories of creation—the great work of redemption—the resurrection of Jesus—divine providence, especially in its bearings on our own history and that of our families,—the preached word—the heavenly rest—in fine, the facts, doctrines, and precepts of the Bible are so many fruitful topics, on which, if the heart be in tune, we may dwell with mutual delight and edification. Let us then imitate the disciples who, on their way to Emmaus, talked of the Savior; and we may then hope that—as in their case—Jesus will himself draw nigh, and impart to us the knowledge of his truth, and reveal to us the glories of his risen person.

CHAPTER XI.

DOING GOOD ON THE SABBATH DAY.

"It is lawful," said Christ, "to do good on the Sabbath day." From this we perceive, that it is a season not merely for the *reception*, but also for the *communication* of good. Works of charity are peculiarly appropriate on this day.

Whilst Christians, therefore, should use the Sabbath as a season of rest from the cares and business of life, and should so attend upon the duties of the closet and the sanctuary, as to secure the blessings which the day is designed to impart; they should not forget, that their great exemplar

went about doing good; and that provided the opportunity is presented, he expects us in this respect to be his followers.

Some, we admit, are, by the providence of God, so situated as to exempt them in a great measure from this obligation; and they are hence called upon to make doubly sure their own salvation. Still how few can plead, that on this day, they have neither the ability nor the opportunity to do good. Can they not pray for others? Is there not some one near them over whom they have influence, and who, through their example or advice may be induced to hallow the day? It is a season well suited to such benevolent efforts. Men are taken off from their ordinary pursuits. The interval is calculated to induce a serious tone of feeling. It is a pause amid the stirring events of life; and how few but must feel within them, at such a season, some pulsations of moral sensibility!

Take the careless sinner into your affectionate consideration on this day. If he is near your person or under your roof, he is there by the arrangement of Providence; and there can be no time more favorable for benefitting him. You may then offer in his behalf your prayers, supplicating that the word of God may reach his heart and bring him to repentance. You may discreetly, yet faithfully counsel him in relation to his best interests. Have you a book well adapted to fix his attention and lead his thoughts to God? Lend it to him, and you will then have an opportunity to converse with him in relation to its contents.

How much good might be done, if Christians had more of the spirit of doing good! How many, now far off, might, with suitable efforts, be brought under the means of grace! Here, for example, is a church in a dense population, yet how thinly attended! Why is this? Why are hundreds

wandering in the streets, or violating the day by excursions of pleasure? Is it impossible to turn their feet unto God's testimonies? Can nothing be done to save these precious but perishing souls? Suppose the people of God were to say, that no personal labor on their part should be wanting to bring them under the means of grace. Suppose every member of the church should feel it to be his duty to secure the attendance of some one or more who have not hitherto frequented the sanctuary; and that with this object in view, Christians should spread themselves as far as possible over the careless portion of the community, persuading them to keep the Sabbath and to visit the sanctuary. Can we calculate the good which might ensue? "Go out," said our Lord to his disciples, "into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." In the spirit of this command, and with love to Christ and souls, let Christians labor in every lawful and proper way to induce the Sabbath violator to seek the house of God. Let the work become general, and "the ways of Zion," we have reason to believe, would no longer "mourn;" nor would there be so few to attend upon "her solemn feasts."

There is one field of exertion which God has furnished believers, and especially the younger church-members, which promises an abundant harvest. Almost every congregation at the present day, has its Sabbath-school. Here is good ground wherein the precious seed may be cast. Here a whole generation may be trained for heaven. Will any stand idle, while the streets or lanes can furnish him with immortal minds in all the waste and barrenness of nature? Will he fold his arms and cry "no man hath hired me," when Jesus says to him, "the poor ye have always with you; feed my lambs?"

This work, it is true, cannot be done, but at some ex-

pense of ease and of labor. The faithful teacher must expect weariness and painfulness. He must forego some of the privileges and personal comforts which others on the Sabbath enjoy ; but let him neither faint nor grow weary. The cross which he bears is for the sake of Jesus and of souls; and though at times, it may press hard, yet the consolation of laboring for such a master and in such a cause, must surely over-balance the temporary fatigue and deprivation. Every young Christian should claim a place in this department of labor, and should strive by the help of God, to bring the youth under his care to a saving knowledge of the Redeemer.

The domestic circle is a fine field of usefulness; and the parent or guardian who is the centre of this circle may do much on the Sabbath to " bless his household." Besides affording them facilities for attending upon the private and public services of religion, he may himself instruct them in the doctrines and precepts of the gospel. A prayerful and systematic attention to this department of duty will, I had almost said, insure the salvation of his house.

High above all other means of usefulness stands the sacred ministry. The Sabbath is the great working day of God's servants. Then must they put in the sickle. It is no day of rest to them : but the labor is sweet if done for Christ ; and the anticipated plaudit, " well done, good and faithful servant," should sustain them amid toil and discouragement ; whilst they remember, that, hard as they are now called to labor, eternity will be long enough to rest in ; when they shall enjoy a Sabbath that shall be without weariness and without end.

CHAPTER XII.

SABBATH EVENING.

As the day of rest declines, and "the sweet evening cometh on," what are the reflections which should occupy the mind? If we have visited the house of God, can we forbear to recollect the truths which have been discussed or enforced? Bring the meditative powers then to bear upon them, and with accompanying prayer, endeavor to render permanent any good impressions which may have been made.

Let the Christian enter his closet and shut the door; and there, as in the sight of God, let him preach over to his heart and conscience the subjects which have been presented. Were this plan generally adopted, how powerful would be its influence over the whole succeeding week! But alas, there is reason to fear that, in general, sermons are heard too much in the spirit which an apostle condemns, when he says, "beholding our natural face in a glass, we go away and forget what manner of persons we are." Yes, we almost forget, ere the Sabbath sun has sunk beneath the horizon. The world, in many instances, comes knocking for admission, before the tolling bell has sounded its curfew and signified, that the public exercises of the day are ended.

What more appropriate season can there be for devotion, than the Sabbath evening? Then, it is to be presumed, the soul has been enabled to shake off some of her earthly clogs, and to plume her pinions for an upward flight. The tendency of all that has been heard is, to bring eternity to view and to thrust back from the thoughts the obtrusive world.

In many instances, a new impulse toward heaven is given, and the christian graces are quickened into strength and activity. How important then to seize the favorable moment, for securing the advantages which the day and its services have given! Shall we relax our efforts when the earnest of victory is bestowed? Shall we suffer the world to steal away our thoughts from heaven just as they have got within the precincts of its bright portals? A quaint but excellent author observes, "there are many like those soldiers who are victorious in the day, but lose all at night through their security and sloth. They do not watch and stand to their arms, but suffer the enemy to surprise them, to break up their quarters and spoil their tents, when they are secure, dreaming of no hazard. Many are like Hannibal, that knew better how to obtain a victory than how to improve it when got. Watch then against the devil, the world, and your own hearts, and beware of losing at night what you gained through the day."

There is need of such an exhortation, as all must admit who have noticed their peculiar feelings and temptations towards the close of the Sabbath. Not unfrequently is the bodily frame exhausted, from the fixed position, for so great a length of time, which the hearing of two or three discourses requires, and there is therefore a natural reaction disposing us to indulge the flesh instead of bracing our efforts anew in the work of private devotion. The mind also, tasked to the consideration of new and perhaps exciting subjects, manifests a similar tendency to relaxation. Hence, towards the close of the day, Christians should watch lest Satan get an advantage of them, and they thus lose, by indulgence, the spiritual benefits of the Sabbath.

The evening of the sacred day should find us nearer to heaven than we were in the morning, and better fitted to

engage in its hallowed employments. It marks a weekly stage in our pilgrimage, and is like the welcome resting-place to the weary traveller. The supposition is that our spirits have been greatly refreshed and our christian zeal animated; that we have "drank of the brook in the way," and so have "lifted up our head." As the shadows of this blessed day gather over us, and the soft twilight — doubly calm on this delightful evening — invites us to meditation, let us ascend in our contemplations to the eternal rest,

"Where the assembly ne'er breaks up,
The Sabbath never ends."

How often does the pious heart groan over the burden of the flesh! The Sabbath evening may find the Christian wearied *in*, but never wearied *of*, the service of his Master.

The tired body demands the repose of sleep. But will it always be so? O no; there is an hour of liberation hastening on, when the flesh will no longer drag down the spirit; when a sense of weariness will never again be felt, nor the necessity for muscular relaxation exist; when the soul, strengthened for the work in which it is to be forever employed, will put forth its active energies in the uninterrupted worship of Jehovah. How wide is the contrast between the cold and feeble service which, in our best frames, we are able to pay to God here on earth, and that seraphic glow of spirit which we shall feel and exhibit when we mingle in the choirs of heaven, and enjoy a full, and direct vision of God and the Lamb.

"Thine earthly Sabbaths, Lord, we love;
But there's a nobler rest above;
To that our longing souls aspire,
With cheerful hope and strong desire.

No more fatigue — no more distress ;
Nor sin nor death shall reach the place ;
No groans shall mingle with the songs
Which warble from immortal tongues.

Sabbath Evening in the Family.

It is highly important, on the Sabbath evening, where there is a family, that something like a formal review of the day's privileges and occupations, should take place. Some hour should be selected most convenient to the members of the household, in order that all may be in their place ; and the exercises should be conducted with special reference to their spiritual improvement. Besides reading the Scriptures, it may be proper, on this occasion, to advert to the instructions of the pulpit — to call up the text — to inquire how much of the discourse has been understood, and what impressions have been made upon the mind. It is a favorable opportunity to elicit the feelings, and to meet them with such remarks and exhortations as may seem to be demanded. Who can say but that an arrow has been lodged in the secret soul! The very first inquiry has sometimes revealed the interesting fact, that the sinner was under conviction ; and that he needed only a single word to call forth a full expression of his anxiety. It is possible that some member of the family has for the first time been led to give ear to the gospel message ; and as the inquiry passes round, " Who hath believed the report ?" some one may answer favorably. Or, there may be doubts and difficulties on the mind as to certain parts of the discourse ; and a natural diffidence to speak on the subject may induce the individual to brood over them in secret ; when, if he were distinctly interrogated, he might state them and so have them resolved.

This family inquiry-meeting, if it may be so called, should aim at ascertaining each individual's feelings, in view of the religious privileges just enjoyed. If any serious impressions are made, then is the time to deepen them ; or if opposition to the truth is manifested, there is the place to meet it with such explanations and appeals as the case may require.

By such a course as we recommend, the head of a house has the opportunity under God, of exerting a very salutary influence. Were the practice to become general, the shyness on religious subjects manifested by children towards their parents would no longer exist. The child would not, as is often the case, seek the advice of a stranger in preference to that of his parent ; but would be quick to unbosom himself to one so near in affection, and who had already manifested so deep an interest in his spiritual welfare.

Serious impressions, amounting sometimes to conviction of sin, have been made on young minds by the Sabbath exercises, but for want of just such inquiries and counsels, they have gone off like the " morning cloud or the early dew." Had they been deepened by the family inquiry-meeting ; had the well-known voice of parental love searched them out and applied the proper instructions, who can say that they might not have issued in conversion ? But alas, the Sabbath solemnity was succeeded by the clamors of the world and the calls of pleasure, and these dawnings of good in the soul were soon extinguished.

There is not, this side of heaven, a moral picture more truly beautiful than a pious family arranged on Sabbath evening for the closing exercise of the day. With patriarchal dignity the father takes his place as the constituted high priest of his house. In him, religion has wrought her silent triumphs, and his very countenance bespeaks the

peace which reigns within. On the Sabbath especially he seems to wear the aspect of heaven. Like Moses after communing on the mount with Jehovah, he shows an unwonted brightness of countenance. Around him gather a group of well-instructed minds, and not seldom arrayed like himself in the "beauties of holiness." His prayers and counsels have not been in vain. His faith and works have spoken to their hearts; and God has fulfilled to him the promise of Abraham, in spiritual blessings descending upon his offspring. From the youngest — who is nestling close by the mother's side — to the oldest, whose example has won the respect of the less experienced members of the house, all are intent on the solemn business before them. A sacred stillness reigns. The Scriptures having been read, and the signal given for prayer, all bow together before God, to acknowledge His mercies, to confess their sins, and to implore His continued favor and protection. Is not this a spectacle for angels as well as for men? Must not those interested witnesses of our moral condition feel in view of it, as if the curse which fell on man and deprived him of Eden, is gloriously counteracted by the grace which produces such a picture as this?

What a contrast is presented by many an ungodly family? There neither the morning nor the evening sacrifice ascends to heaven. The Sabbath is closed without even so much as a recognition of their dependence on divine goodness. Glad when its restraints are over, they rush with accelerated speed into the world. Dreadful is the condition of those families who keep not the Sabbath and who call not upon God. Should this meet the eye of an ungodly parent, who never leads his household to the throne of grace, let me remonstrate a moment with him. Is it not high time to consider your responsibilities and to com-

mence training up your family for heaven? First, obtain for your own soul, the requisite grace. You must know God *yourself*, in order to lead your children and dependents to know Him. You must reverence his Sabbaths, or your offspring will be likely to trample every sacred obligation under foot. You must set up the family altar. It is not enough that you attend church; God must be worshipped in your family. Religion must sanctify the domestic circle, or both yourself and the dear objects of your love may be lost forever. Is the Sabbath closing upon you? Have you heard the renewed warning? Why then will you not at once begin to serve God and keep his commandments? Why will you not now — for the first time — bow your knees before your long-neglected Benefactor, and strive even at this late hour to obtain salvation for yourself and for your household? Soon the day of mercy will be gone. You and your children will soon be at the bar of eternal judgment. Oh, what an account must you render, if you have lived and died an ungodly parent, and trained to the same ruin the immortal souls committed to your care.

CHAPTER XIII.

SABBATH VIOLATIONS.

Travelling on the Lord's day; its commonness and criminality.

It has come to pass, in many instances, that men of business, and the votaries of pleasure actually make their calculations to travel on the Lord's day, with a view of saving time which, as they imagine, would otherwise be unemployed.

Every facility is offered to accommodate their wishes, and even to tempt them to carry on this crusade against a divine institution. Almost all our great thorough-fares are now open to Sabbath travelling. The stage horn is pealing its note of invitation—the steamboat bell is ringing —crowds of passengers are hurrying to and fro—the rail-road car* is thundering along its track, or sending the spiteful hiss of its steam into the pained ears even of God's worshippers. What a scene for a christian land! Can we reasonably expect the insulted Deity to hold back his vengeance from a people, who bear the name of Christian, and who yet habitually trample on one of heaven's most important commands?

Many of the lines of communication which have been opened between the different and distant parts of our land trench upon a part at least of the holy Sabbath. Some of

* It gives the writer pleasure to say, that to the violation of the Sabbath by rail-roads, there are some honorable exceptions; among which he would mention, with no small degree of satisfaction, that of the "Hudson and Berkshire rail-road."

them openly drive over the entire day ; whilst others invade only the beginning or the end of it. In long journies too there is no lying by, in order to observe God's commands ; but the vehicle must press on to its destination. From these circumstances, there is a strong temptation to overlook the express command of God, and to find apologies for its violation. We speak now, not merely of those who do not profess to have the fear of God before their eyes. We are pained to find that the nominally pious even will so often avail themselves of these Sabbath desecrating vehicles, to the injury of their consciences and to the dishonoring of God.

For example, it is not very uncommon for an individual to make an engagement to be in a distant place, or to attend to some business of a public or private nature at a given time ; when it is plain, that the fulfilment of that engagement must necessarily involve him in the guilt of Sabbath violation. He may feel justified—or try to feel so—on the ground that any other arrangement would be very inconvenient to him personally, or detrimental to his secular interests. But if he admit the principle that our duty to God is paramount—and here an express command is concerned—he must see in an instant, that his worldly advancement or his personal convenience is not a justifying plea. No ;—he is bound never to make an engagement which shall bring upon his soul the guilt of Sabbath violation ; and, in all his contemplated journies, he should scrupulously calculate for the religious observance of the Lord's day.

Another will console himself with the idea that his abridgment of sacred time is so *small*—that he barely touches upon the beginning or the end of it—that he is enabled to be in his place at public worship,—and he

pleads that to *him* also, it would be a very great loss of time, if confined always in his travelling to the exact hours of the secular week. Hence even men professing godliness are occasionally found, carrying their business or protracting their visits of friendship into the close of Saturday; and then embarking so as to arrive at their homes on the Sabbath: or having worshipped God with apparent solemnity a part of the day, they may be seen stealing away at night-fall to the steamboat landing, and exhibiting themselves to a scoffing world as violators of the fourth commandment.

It is in vain to plead, that only a *part* of the day is desecrated. If God has said, that we may violate a part, provided we keep the other part; and if he has designated *what* part, then the case will be altered. But there is no such dispensation or exception. He has hallowed *the whole twenty-four hours;* and if a man trench voluntarily upon the last hour —though it may be when half the world are locked in sleep—he as certainly violates God's command, as if, in the face of the whole community, he desecrated the very heart of it. Besides, look at the example of this Sabbath violating Christian. How many exulting eyes will fall upon him! How many, by the example of this one professor, will be glad to sustain themselves in the habitual desecration of the day! O, how does the cause of piety bleed at every pore, when such conduct is exhibited by those who profess godliness!

But are there no circumstances, it may be asked, which justify us in travelling on the Lord's day? May we not be so situated as to make it allowable, on the Sabbath, to undertake or to continue a journey? It may be said for instance, "here is a female placed under the care of one who has not a very nice conscience on this subject; must

she put off her journey, or obstinately refuse to proceed?" The case is an urgent one, we admit; but it is easy to see, that unless some other necessity than her personal convenience, or her worldly interest, or her social engagements lies upon her, she is bound to abandon this opportunity of journeying at so great an expense to conscience and to religion. If there is a probability that the Sabbath will be included in the journey, she is bound either not to go, or to stipulate for its observance by the way.

Another instance may be cited, in which an individual, towards the close of a journey, finds himself within a day's distance from home. He cannot reach the desired spot without invading a part of the Sabbath. His anxiety and affection press him to proceed. What shall he do? Shall he, at an expense of time and money, pass the Sabbath among strangers? We answer, unhesitatingly, *yes*. "He that loveth father, or mother, son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." So says our Lord to this man, when the conflict is between his affection for his family and his obligation to obey a divine command. In this example of self-denial, his example would be worth a vast deal to the cause of religion; and when, after such a demonstration of principle, he shall arrive at home, his enjoyment will have the zest of "a conscience void of offence towards God."

A conscientious christian man—well known to the public but now no more on earth—was, from the nature of his business, abroad over the land a great portion of his time. He was a truly devoted disciple of Jesus. Ascending the Mississippi in one of the great steamers, he inquired of the captain on Saturday, if he was in the habit of stopping to keep the Sabbath? To the ears of such a man, the question of course sounded very strange; and upon his answer-

ing in the negative, "Well then," said the passenger, "you will please to set me on shore at the next landing place." The captain remonstrated, assuring the good man that he might be left there a week without the opportunity of getting on. Nothing moved, however, when once his mind was made up, on a point of duty, he went on shore; and at a poor neighborhood endeavored to do good and to keep the Sabbath. It proved to him a happy day. He trusted in God, that some interposition in his behalf would take place, and his confidence—as it proved—was not misplaced. After a refreshing sleep, he arose early on Monday morning; and one of the first sounds which greeted his ear, was the bell of an ascending steamer announcing her approach to the landing. "Blessed are they that do his commandments."

Some have thought that, where the business of the church demanded their presence, it is lawful and proper to travel on the whole or on a portion of the Sabbath in order to accomplish it. Ministers of the gospel have sometimes so agreed in relation to their attendance upon ecclesiastical meetings. But will the end sanctify the means? Or may religion be served with one hand whilst she is stabbed by the other? In such a Sabbath desecrating land as ours, must not the church receive far more detriment, by this Sabbath travelling, than she can receive benefit by all that is subsequently done in her public councils? Can God's ministers countenance, by any act of theirs, a sin so prevalent and so ruinous? Let them, at almost any sacrifice, avoid even the appearance of this evil; for if *they* are lax in relation to the observance of the Sabbath, what can be expected of the mere men of the world?

It cannot be denied, that there are cases, in which a journey on the Sabbath may become necessary; and then, the

circumstances, if known, will be admitted as a justifying plea. But such cases are rare, and they respect generally some of the severe dispensations of Providence. It is not from these instances that the cause of religion is likely to suffer, or the Sabbath violator to be countenanced in his course. No; it is when personal convenience or the pressure of business induces the professor to invade a part or the whole of the Lord's day, that the cause of piety is so deeply wounded and dishonored. Nor is it very difficult for a conscientious man to ascertain the occasions on which he may be justified, in travelling on the sacred day. Occurring as they do so seldom, and being connected with a benevolent rather than a selfish motive, he can scarcely be at a loss in deciding.

The importance of a scrupulous example on this point cannot be fully estimated. In a country where the spirit of the people is active and restless almost beyond comparison; and where the thirst for gain is as deep and prevalent as in any other in the world; it is easy to perceive, that the tendency to break over this moral restraint must be very powerful. Will the lovers of money and of pleasure be likely to stop in their impetuous career, when met by this sacred barrier? Will they not wish for arguments to justify them in their breach of heaven's law? And what more potent argument *can* they have or ask than the fact that some very reputable Christians are in the habit of travelling on the Lord's day? As they look around among the crowd, if their eye can detect, as a fellow passenger, the professor of religion, they feel at once relieved of at least a part of that secret misgiving which conscience, even though long abused, is apt to create in their guilty bosoms.

But if, on the other hand, professors of religion were never known as Sabbath travellers—except in cases of undoubt-

ed necessity—how powerful would be the influence of their united example! *Then* would the whole responsibility fall upon the men of the world; and the pressure, depend upon it, would be felt. Conscience, no longer weakened by the inconsistent and lax conduct of the professedly pious, would be left to administer her unmitigated reproofs. Such an example would do more to rescue the Sabbath from wide-spread desecration than any civil enactments which could be passed. It would speak a language which the public conscience would be quick to understand. If among the entire company of Sabbath violating passengers in coach or steamboat not one could be found who was a christian professor, it would take out of the mouth of the wicked at least one scornful interrogatory, "what do ye more than others?" It would show, that, in point of practical morality, there *was* a difference. It would stamp their own conduct as Sabbath-breakers with manifest unlawfulness. And if, in addition to this, it could be affirmed, that no professor of the gospel was even *indirectly* concerned in favoring the sin in question; if not a cent of the stock, thus tainted, were owned or appropriated by him; whose penetration is so dull as not to see, that the holy Sabbath would at once assert its claims over the universal conscience?

Let Christians of every denomination look at this point. Remember, brethren, that intimately connected with a scrupulous example in relation to it, is the welfare of religion and the general prosperity of our country. If the Sabbath be gradually undermined, until it is identified with other days, we may then look for the extinction of all that is "lovely and of good report." Of what use then would be our churches, except to provide a place for the "swallow

to make her nest?" And how long could we exist as a free nation, when the strongest ligature which binds us together is torn asunder?

CHAPTER XIV.

SOCIAL VISITING, SECULAR READING, IDLENESS, ETC.

TRAVELLING on the Lord's day is not the only form of Sabbath desecration to which men are addicted. This day being one in which the ordinary business of life is suspended, many, instead of appropriating it wholly to the worship of God, make it a season of social visitation. Some, who retain a slight sense of religious obligation, employ a part of it in attending upon divine worship, whilst the remainder is occupied in the interchange of social civilities. But they should understand, that this prior compliment to a divine institution will not cancel the guilt of subsequent violation. Such a use—or rather abuse—of the Lord's day may not appear, to those who practice it, in a very reprehensible light; but in the eye of heaven, it is an actual breach of the fourth commandment. We are to "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Who will claim that mere social visitation has any thing holy in it? Who can affirm that the conversation generally practiced on such occasions savors even of true piety?

By such conduct, we not only rob ourselves of the advantages of the Sabbath; but we may prevent our friends and neighbors—even if disposed—from availing themselves of them. We at least tempt them to sin, if they are inclined

to keep the Sabbath; and if they are not so inclined, we add the influence of our example to strengthen them in a practice manifestly at variance with the commands of God.

But is it improper, it may be asked, for families and relatives to meet on this day? We answer; if such meetings are intended for spiritual edification, there can be no possible objection to them; provided they occur out of the time usually allotted to public worship. We agree that relatives may make the Sabbath subserve their spiritual interests. If the various branches—with the patriarch at the head—assemble around the domestic altar, to unite in praises and thanksgivings; and if their conversation while together, be for mutual religious improvement, there can be no doubt of the utility and lawfulness of such a meeting. But if they assemble on the principle of mere social enjoyment; and with a view to discuss the news of the day—to talk over the events of the preceding week—to dwell upon the ordinary topics which friends and relatives are accustomed to consider interesting; we have no hesitation in condemning as improper and unlawful, such an appropriation of the sacred day.

These remarks are intended for those who vindicate the lawfulness and propriety of family parties on the Sabbath. Must they not admit that, in the unrestrained intercourse of relatives, there is a probability that subjects will be broached and talked about, which, to say the least, are not in accordance with the sacredness of the day; nor calculated to aid the soul in its progress towards heaven? How much more likely shall we be to keep the fourth commandment, if we spend the time mostly in retirement! Let each family be on this day, as far as possible, alone. Let all their arrangements have in view the spiritual improvement of so delightful an institution.

"Wisdom and pleasure dwell at home;
Retired and silent seek them there;
This is the way to overcome;
The way to escape the tempter's snare."

Another mode of desecrating the day is by a resort to books or newspapers, with a view to gratify curiosity, or to while away the tedious hours.

It needs not an additional sentence to make it evident, that such a practice is wholly wrong. It can hardly be supposed that any professor of piety would do thus. And yet, in times of great political excitement, or when any uncommon rumor is abroad, the newspaper presents a strong temptation even to a mind fortified by christian principle. But touch it you cannot, christian reader, and be innocent. The day is the Lord's, and by taking up that paper to gratify a vain curiosity you deliberately desecrate it. Besides, will the information you seek facilitate your intercourse with heaven? Will it not distract still more your already too versatile mind? One of the most formidable obstacles to the influence of the pulpit over impenitent men lies, in my view, in this very thing. The post-office supplies them with the recent news. From the very doors of the sanctuary they go to receive it. The moment they arrive at home—and even before—they are searching for it. How timely this—says Satan—to erase any serious impression which may have been left on the conscience! O, it is heart-rending to see how many are thus diverted from that truth which a moment before clothed their countenances at least with deep solemnity. What a powerful engine this, in the hands of the adversary, to catch away the word so that it may become unfruitful!

Men of the world, do you know, that by such a course, you are not only robbing God of his due, but the soul of its

salvation? Encourage no longer this wholesale profanation of the Sabbath by our post-office department. Let your papers lie untouched until Monday, when God's prohibition will be taken off, and you can innocently read them. Let your reading, on the Sabbath at least, be for the soul's improvement. Remember that day and keep it holy.

On this subject, we trust the entire company of believers will present a uniform example of strict adherence to the divine command. Christian, let thy hand, on this day, handle only the word of life, or such books as derive their interest from the great fountain of God. Touch not, handle not the vehicle of political news, nor the book of mere amusement. Show to the world that this day is with you a consecrated season; and that, be the temptation never so strong, you will not even look into an inappropriate or forbidden volume.

Some, having no relish for the worship of God, spend the day in absolute idleness. They sleep away the best portion of it; and rise only to desecrate the remainder by sauntering listlessly through the streets, surveying their possessions, or engaged in some excursion of pleasure. It is in vain to them that the Sabbath bell speaks in inviting tones of the rich provision which Heaven has prepared for man. In their sluggish soul there is no chord to vibrate to this music of mercy. O how much ye lose, ye who thus while away the precious hours of salvation! Know ye not, that soon the last Sabbath sun will set upon your eyes, and the sound of that bell fall for the last time, on your ears? Will it be no cause of regret then, that you did not heed the invitation—that you slept away in cold indifference these golden moments? "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

I will close this chapter by an extract from that eminent writer, the Rev. Dr. Dwight. In speaking of the ways in which the Sabbath may be violated, he refers among other things to *worldly conversation.*

"There is no way in which the Sabbath is more easily, more insensibly, more frequently, and more fatally violated than this. Temptations to it are always at hand. The transgression always seems a small one; usually a dubious one at first; and often no transgression at all. Multitudes of persons, of sober and well meaning dispositions, nay, multitudes, as there is but too much reason to fear, of professing Christians, beginning with religious subjects, slide imperceptibly towards those which are considered moral in such a degree as scarcely to differ from religious ones; thence to secular themes bordering upon these; and thence to mere matters of business or amusement. Such persons before they are aware, find themselves occupied in conversing about the affairs of the neighborhood; the strangers who are at church; the new dresses, fashions, business, diversions, news, and politics. To these they are led by *mere worldly conversation* concerning the prayers, the psalmody, or the sermon, as having been well or ill devised, written, spoken, or performed; by a history merely secular of the sickness and deaths in the neighborhood, or elsewhere, or of the dangerous or fatal accidents, which have lately happened; the state of the weather, the season, the crops, the prospects, the affairs of the family; and by innumerable other things of a similar nature. The next step is ordinarily, an habitual employment of this holy day in open, cool, and self-satisfied conversation about business; schemes of worldly pursuits; bargains; gains and losses. It is not to be understood that *Christians* go all these lengths. It is my real belief, however, that they go much

further than they can justify; and fail, in this manner, of their duty; their improvement in the christian life; their proper exemplariness of character; the evidence of their piety, which would spring from these sources; the hope which it would inspire; the peace which would accompany them; and the joy in which they would delightfully terminate. Many sober men, however, who but for this very conduct might probably become Christians, go all these lengths; and thus lose, insensibly, their tenderness of conscience; their soberness of mind; and their desire as well as their hope of eternal life. Men less well-principled start, originally, at *the end* of this career; and thus annihilate the Sabbath at once; bidding, without anxiety, a final adieu to the Sabbath itself, and to its rich, exalted, and immortal blessings.

"The profanation of the Sabbath by *actions* is seen and acknowledged by all decent men, who acknowledge it as a day consecrated by God to himself. Actions are so open to the view of mankind; are so definitive a proof of the disposition; and, when violations of a known rule of duty, constitute so gross a proof of impiety; that all doubts concerning the true construction to be given them, vanish whenever they appear. The common and favorite modes of profaning the Sabbath in this way, are spending our time in dress; in ministering to a luxurious appetite; in walking or riding for amusement; in writing letters of friendship; in visiting; and in reading books, which are not of a religious, but merely of a decent character; and ultimately those which are formed to be the means of amusement and sport. The end of this progress, generally esteemed more gross, though perhaps in many instances not more, and in others less sinful; is the devotion of this sacred day to downright business. Persons, who go this length, occupy

the time in writing letters of business; posting their accounts; visiting post-offices; making bargains; transmitting money to their correspondents; going or sending to markets; making journeys, at first with and afterwards without pretences of necessity; and ultimately laboring openly in the ordinary employments of life. This is what is called in the text* *doing our own ways. A man's way*, in scriptural language, is the customary course of his life." We would add, that though such ways may, to those who practice them, "seem right," yet "the end thereof are the ways of death."

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUDING ADDRESS.

In bringing this treatise to a close, I would respectfully address myself to two or three classes of my readers who may occupy important stations involving weighty moral responsibility.

Should this book fall into the hands of one of the legislators or law-administrators of the land, I would ask of you, as a civilian, attention to the institution of the Sabbath, as an auxiliary in sustaining and promoting the vital principles of our republic. I wish you to entertain as deep a conviction as myself, of the fact, that the continued existence of this government depends mainly upon the prevalence of piety and virtue. Many of our writers and orators declaim eloquently on the importance of general intelligence; and they seem to rest all their hopes for the perpetuity of our institu-

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* Isa. 58: 13.

tions simply on the diffusion of knowledge. Now, far from wishing to lessen the weight of their arguments, or to diminish in the least, the impression which they may have made on the public mind, I must still be permitted to say, that knowledge *alone* will not save us from political shipwreck. *Moral principle must exist in connection with knowledge, or the latter will prove as potent an engine for the destruction, as it always does, when under the control of moral principle, for the advancement of social order and happiness.*

I might illustrate this by facts. The first act of rebellion in the universe, was not, so far as we know, from the loss of knowledge, but from the loss of virtue. The most powerful agent to over-turn and to destroy at this moment, is a spirit of vast intelligence but of equally malignant intentions. And what makes heaven a scene of such perfect order? Not the intelligence of its inhabitants simply, but their conjoined virtue. Was France—we ask the privilege of introducing this striking example once more—was she wanting in general intelligence, when she passed so rapidly on a sea of blood, from monarchy to anarchy, and from anarchy to despotism? No, she wanted piety and virtue. She had abjured God, trampled upon the Sabbath, and had thrown herself into the arms of infidelity; and the want of moral principle rather than of intelligence, is what at this very time, makes her constitutional monarchy of doubtful continuance.

Sweep away the Sabbath then, or gradually weaken its obligation upon the public mind, and you demolish one of the pillars which support our political fabric. The Sabbath, beyond all question, is the great bulwark of public morals. It stands as a formidable check to general depravity. It lifts up heaven's edicts and points men to the excellency of virtue—to the destructive nature of sin—to the authority of God—and to the retributions of eternity. It has a more

potent influence, in keeping down the spirit of misrule; in making men good citizens from principle, than all the mere legal enactments, which political wisdom could devise, or civil power enforce. Guard then, from contempt or desecration, this holy day. Frown upon those scoffing itinerants, foreign or native, male or female, who level their infidel slang against the institutions of the Bible; who come among us to sow the seeds of atheism; and who, with the honied language of philanthropy on their lips, are in reality laying a fatal train under the very foundation of our national security. The Sabbath is our sheet anchor amid the occasional storm of political excitement, and the inundation of popular violence. If our country is to maintain the high stand which she has taken, she must cling to this sacred institution, founded in the wisdom of heaven, and demonstrated to be an important barrier alike against despotism and anarchy.

To the employer, whose influence reaches over one or many, I would say, not only sacredly regard this institution yourself, but allow your workmen and dependents the same privilege. If you have a clerk, push him not beyond the hour which marks the secular time. He has a conscience, which needs to be encouraged, not deadened; and religious rights, which—though in his state of dependence, he may not think proper to assert—are nevertheless to be respected. Be the pressure what it may, let your laborers and dependents never be driven to profane God's holy day. Remember that a man's *own* responsibility is more than he can bear; and that to assume the fearful addition of compulsory labor on the Sabbath, must make the developments of the judgment day awful beyond conception. Besides, by Sabbath-day service, little is gained and much may be lost. The loss in moral principle—in the diminution of the power of conscience, makes the risk, as to hon-

esty in the employed, far more important than the mere avails of such labor to the employer. But why appeal to these motives? There stands the eternal tablet on which God himself has written, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." That surely is enough.

To the parent and guardian, what more need be said to secure their influence in favor of the Sabbath, than simply to state the fact, that with the observance of this day by their children, are intimately connected their personal credit—their respectability—their morality, nay even their salvation. Train them up then under the droppings of the sanctuary. Teach them scrupulously to observe the fourth commandment. Watch their first aberrations and endeavor to counteract them by all lawful and proper means. I am aware that coercion, after a certain age, will do but little good. But *early* training is the great point. You must not wait until pride and obduracy shall set all coercive measures at defiance. If faithful to their childhood, the necessity for any thing more than persuasion and example will not be likely to exist. But even at the period referred to—when the temptations to Sabbath profanation are strongest—much may be done by the united influence of personal example, prayer and persuasion.

Professors of the religion of Christ! One word only in addition to the arguments, counsels, and appeals already given in these pages. On *you* rests the weighty responsibility of holding up this institution of heaven. If *your* example is irreproachable, all will be well. If nothing in the shape of ease, or convenience, or profit, shall drive you to infringe on any part of this holy season—if you observe scrupulously the divine command, "not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure," but consecrating the day by abstinence from labor, and by acts of devotion;—I

again say, the Sabbath in all its moral power is safe. Such an example by the great body of Christians, will prove to the day and all its hallowing influences, a security, which the onset of scepticism—the lawless thirst after pleasure—the reckless pursuit of gain, and the legalized invasion of Heaven's law, cannot effectually undermine. LET CHRISTIANS DO THEIR DUTY, AND THE SABBATH IS SAFE.

PART III.

MEDITATIONS AND PRAYERS.

MEDITATION I.

THE SAINTS' REST.

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. *Heb.* 4: 9.

The earthly Sabbath is a beautiful but inadequate symbol of the rest above. We lay aside our secular business, cease from worldly toil, and repair to the sanctuary, to offer unto God our praises and thanksgivings. But alas, we cannot divest ourselves of the flesh, which impedes and mars our worship; and which, in a few hours, becomes weary under the most exalted privileges. Above all, have we to lament the remaining depravity which works within us; begetting unbelief, coldness, and deadness—distracting the thoughts even in the most solemn acts of worship—and rendering, at times, the most appropriate means of grace inefficient. What believer has not groaned over this cause of misimproved Sabbaths? Still, there are seasons when the sanctuary seems like one of the outer courts of heaven's glory. There are times, when we can exclaim, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" Then, by faith, we see the glory of the Lord. The word is quick and powerful. Our souls are borne upward as on eagles' wings. A sacred, calm delight takes possession of us; and God appears to bow his heavens and come down to bless

us. But even such Sabbaths are not worthy to be compared with that eternal rest, where the unfettered, unpolluted soul shall worship the Lamb without interruption and without end. The body will there not impede but augment our happiness; for it will be a spiritual body, which can no longer be the medium of temptation, and which shall experience no fatigue. Nor will sin, O blissful thought, be there, to dim our eye or to pollute our worship. We shall not only see God, but see him with unobstructed vision. We shall not only love him, but love him with unwavering affections. We shall not only praise him, but praise him in pure, exalted strains forever. Glorious rest! Let us rise and hasten towards it with renewed vigor; for "here we have no continuing city."

Prayer.

Blessed be thy name, O God, that thou hast prepared and reserved a rest for thy people. *Here* thou hast taught us, is the scene of our toilsome pilgrimage—that we are not to expect our heaven here. Yet O, how often are we building tabernacles on earth! We act as if this were to be our permanent abode. Enable us, O God, to cast the eye of faith forward to "the rest that remaineth." Give us such views of its alluring glories, as shall make the brightest scenes of earth look dim. Let us see the Lamb enthroned. Let us see the pure company of the saints and angels. Let us have a sweet foretaste of the celestial joys. Then, O God, shall we cease to desire the honors or the pleasures of this vain world. Then shall we forsake its attractions allured by visions of so much superior lustre. Do we not feel some faint desires after thee, O God? Are we not oppressed with sin's heavy load? Have we not waged eternal war against our lusts? Grant then, that the grace which has equipped us for the conflict; and thus far sustained us in it, may carry us triumphant to the close, and put us at last in possession of the heavenly rest. Then, O

Lord, will we give thee all the praise. Our song shall be, "unto him that loved us, and that washed us from our sins in his own blood." To him, and to thee through him, will we ascribe the glory and honor, the dominion and the power, forever. Amen.

MEDITATION II.

THE CONFLICT.

He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. *Rev.* 21: 7.

Although our reward is not of debt but of grace, yet the necessity of struggling against and overcoming our spiritual enemies is constantly urged upon us. Every motive drawn from danger on the one hand, and from delight on the other, is presented in order to rouse us to a vigorous contest. How numerous, subtle, and powerful are our foes! The world appeals most attractively to our natural susceptibilities. Satan assumes at one time the form of an angel of light; and at another, advances boldly to the attack, in all his hellish malignity. Our own lusts are ever ready to kindle in the soul an unhallowed excitement. What a phalanx of spiritual enemies! Blessed be God, we have not to meet them alone and in our own strength! Greater is he that is with us, than all that are against us. The spiritual armor is tendered to us; and, invested in it, we are prepared for a successful warfare. Jesus too, the great Captain of salvation, has already achieved a signal victory over these foes, and he promises to stand by us, to strengthen our weakness, and to lead us on to certain victory. He has moreover held forth a glorious reward. "He that

overcometh shall inherit all things." Yes, all that heaven has of happiness shall be ours. God will be our God, and we shall be his adopted children. Here is an all-powerful stimulus, to animate us in the conflict. Look then steadily at the crown of glory. When the world allures, remember, it is a foe in disguise. When Satan attacks, raise the shield of faith to ward off his fiery darts. When the flesh pleads, take a determined stand against its clamors. Yea, crucify it. Keep under the body, and let the spirit habitually triumph. Soon the warfare will be over. The last enemy, which is death, being conquered, nothing will remain, but to enter upon the glorious, the everlasting reward.

Prayer.

Surrounded by the enemies of our souls, we look upwards to thee, O God, for help. Thou knowest their power and their malignity, and thou art acquainted with our weakness. Within us, is a "heart deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Every where around us, are the allurements of the world. Without thy protecting and supporting hand, we must inevitably fall before the power of the tempter. How often indeed have we been "overcome of evil!" How often by our melancholy lapses, have we proved our own helplessness! The flesh has corrupted us —the world has allured and deceived us. Satan has suddenly attacked and prostrated us, and were it not that thy mercy is boundless, that thy love is unchangeable, we should long since have been abandoned to the powers of hell. But thanks to thy name, O God, thou hast with every temptation made a way for our escape. When, overwhelmed with shame and sorrow at our fall, we have ventured to cast an imploring look towards the mercy seat, thou hast been ready to pardon, restore, and strengthen us. We come to thee anew. We beseech thee to invest our souls with the armor of righteousness. O put thy strength within us.

Help us to watch unto prayer. Instead of confiding in our own arm, may we make thee our refuge and our fortress. In all times of temptation, wilt thou deliver us. Uphold us by the right hand of thy righteousness. Enable us to war a good warfare. May we, without presumption, look forward to the rewards of the faithful; and impelled by the glorious "hope set before us," may we, through grace, overcome every foe, and at last be invested with the privileges and honors which are promised to all thy children, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

MEDITATION III.

THE RISEN SAVIOR.

And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. *John* 20: 14.

We may say of Mary weeping at the sepulchre, behold how she loved him! She came to find her Savior's lifeless body and to weep over it; but even *that* is gone. Her heart is broken. In the anguish of despair, she exclaims, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Mary little thought how near to her stood that very Master, whose death she mourned. He was there to console and to cheer her. No sooner had the supposed gardener uttered the word, "Mary," with all the benign emphasis of expression with which he was wont to address her, than she recognized his well known voice, and flew to embrace his feet. Thus does the weeping believer, or the heart-broken penitent often find, when all seems darkness and despair, that Jesus is near, and about to reveal himself to their troubled souls. He loves to find us weeping. It

is a state indicative of our penitence, and expressive of our desire for his consoling grace. It is in the vale of humility that our Lord seems to abide. There he would have us seek him. It is when, like Mary, we are weeping in the garden, at the cross, or around the tomb, that Jesus draws near, to speak a comforting word to our souls. O, let us welcome afflictions, if they do but bring us near to him! It is heaven, to behold his countenance and to hear his voice. When, borne down with the burden of sorrow, we go to some lonely spot to give vent, in prayer, to these sorrows, sweet is the surprise to our souls, to find there him, of whom it is said, "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows."

Prayer.

How comforting, O Lord, is thy presence! It makes afflictions light and easy to be borne. Nay, it enables us even to "glory in tribulations." But when thou withdrawest thy presence—when, by our sins, we create a distance between thee and our souls, how heavy are our spirits! Nothing then can impart comfort or satisfaction. To a heart that has once felt thy love, it is not in the power of sublunary objects to afford substantial bliss. But, O Lord, though our sins have separated between thee and us, yet when we return with weeping, thou art ever ready to meet us, and to "restore to us, the joy of thy salvation." Thou dost even hasten to embrace us, and to bestow upon us anew the tokens of thy love. Thou lookest tenderly upon thy penitent children. When they seek thee sorrowing, thou art always near. Thy voice seems to say, "be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee." Blessed be thy name, gracious Savior, that now thou art risen; and hast given us the assurance that thou wilt be with thy people, not only in their solitude, but where "two or three of them are gathered together in thy name." O, may our souls ever live beneath the light of thy countenance! When we lose sight of thee, our Lord, may we go weeping till we find thee. Let our hearts never

be at rest when thou art absent. Let it not be in the power of any creature to separate us from thy love. Reign supreme in our affections, and reign there forever. Amen.

MEDITATION IV.

FRUITS OF HOLINESS.

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. *John* 15: 8.

God's glory is the great end of salvation. The whole plan tends to illustrate the wisdom, power, goodness, justice and mercy of God. Christians are specimens of the divine workmanship. If the change which grace has wrought in them, be not strikingly manifest, God is dishonored and the gospel despised. After all that God the Father has done in sending his Son, and Christ the Son has done in dying for us, if we, who profess to be redeemed, do not exhibit unequivocal evidence of the power and reality of religion, our conduct must draw contempt upon the whole scheme of mercy. But if, on the contrary, all men are obliged to confess the power of God in our conversion, and the purity of the gospel in our lives, we then glorify him "who is the author and the finisher of our faith." The more exuberant and healthful the fruits, the more excellent is the tree! If after we have borne only "fruit unto death," we begin to show the "fruit which is unto holiness," men will be obliged to acknowledge in us the grace of God. Our light will then so shine, that others may be led also to glorify our Father. Then we may boldly announce ourselves the disciples of Jesus, and fear no charge of hypocrisy or inconsistency. It will be

evident that we have been with Jesus, and that we bear somewhat of his image. Our usefulness will be extended—our hope become confirmed—and our zeal burn with a steady and increasing flame. God will then acknowledge us as his, and will at last receive us with the welcome, "Well done, good and faithful servants."

Prayer.

Grant, O merciful God, unto thy servants, the grace of thy Holy Spirit to enable us to live to thy glory. May the same power which brought us "out of darkness into thy marvellous light," assist us to "walk in the light as thou art in the light." The eyes of the world, we know, are fixed upon us; yea we are watched by angels, by devils and men. Our spiritual enemies stand ready to triumph in our downfall. Every artifice of Satan is employed to accomplish it. Wicked men would gladly find in our conduct an argument against thy cause. But, O Lord, "hold thou us up, and we are safe." Our trust is in thy grace alone. We have no ability to secure or to advance our own spiritual interests. To thee we cling as to "the strength of our heart." Never for one moment forsake us. We mourn that our life has been thus far so poor a testimony to the power of thy gospel. We are humbled in the dust at the recollection of our sins. O, how often have we dishonored thee! But, heavenly Father, let us now "cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light." Let us henceforth exhibit the fruits of holiness. Yea, let us bear "much fruit." May we be enabled to gain one victory after another, until every sin shall be overcome, and every gospel grace shall adorn our souls. O make us "holy as thou art holy." All this we entreat for Jesus' sake. Amen.

MEDITATION V.

RISEN WITH CHRIST.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. *Col.* 3: 1.

Risen with Christ! What can be the meaning of the sacred penman? How are Christians risen with Christ? It is evident that the language is highly figurative. "Ye are risen with him," says the apostle in the 12th verse of the preceding chapter, "through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Our faith, then—wrought in us by the power of God—disconnects our souls in a sense from "things seen," and introduces us to "things not seen." We leave behind us as motives, and as principal means of enjoyment, the things of earth, and we walk by the light of things celestial. This is our resurrection, whereby we are likened to our glorious Lord, who, assuming a spiritual body, came forth from the darkness of the grave. Having thus risen with Christ, we must of course direct our vision to him, and to the scenes with which he is surrounded. We must "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Our deepest interest should be concentrated on heaven. There dwells he whom our soul loveth—our Father—Redeemer—and Sanctifier. There is the congregation of angels and the spirits of the just made perfect; all sinless and dwelling in a region that is pure. Why then should we be enamoured of earth? Why fear to cross death's dark vale?

"O if my Lord would come and meet,
My soul would spread her wings in haste;
Fly fearless through death's iron gate,
Nor feel the terrors as she passed."

Prayer.

We acknowledge, with shame and contrition—O Lord—that our affections have been "earthly and sensual." So weak, for the most part, has been our faith, that we have seldom had a distinct and impressive view of "the invisible things of God." We have hence been criminally influenced by carnal hopes and pleasures. Alas, we have not lived as those should live, who profess to be "crucified to the world"—to have "risen with Christ." Help us truly to repent of our earthly mindedness; and O impart to us that faith which "worketh by love, purifieth the heart, and overcometh the world." "Turn away our eyes, O Lord, from beholding vanity." Let us henceforth "rise to newness of life." Separating our thoughts from this vain world, enable us to "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Blessed Jesus! One glimpse of thy ineffable glory shall draw our affections from all that is bright and attractive on earth. Disclose thyself then to our view—give us ravishing conceptions of the heavenly state—that henceforth we may be dead to the world; and that our "life may be hid with Christ in God."

MEDITATION VI.

ALL VANITY.

Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do; and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun. *Eccl.* 2: 11.

The author of the book of Ecclesiastes gives us his experience of the unsatisfying nature of all worldly honors and

pleasures. Every thing that could please the eye, charm the ear, gratify the taste, or amuse and enrich the mind, was by him, sought and enjoyed. The whole circle of earth's pleasures was tested. But in the end, all is pronounced "vanity and vexation of spirit." The disappointment results from the very nature of the soul. Its capacity being illimitable, no finite enjoyment can fully meet its enlarged desires. Nothing but a faithful discharge of duty, and the approving smile of God can make the soul happy. Give it what you will—gratify every earthly wish, it will still be wretched if it be without God. All below is vanity. The consideration that worldly good must so soon be relinquished is of itself enough to cast a shade over its enjoyment. The heart must feel that there is nothing permanent here. "Life is but a vapor." All earth-born pleasures are transitory. Death withers every flower as soon as it blooms. Man too is hurried to the tomb and then forgotten. If then all below be stamped with vanity; O, let us seek our all in God. Let us relinquish in desire what we have been accustomed so much to value—that the soul may start anew in the race for a prize worthy of her struggles, and which when obtained will amply reward her toils. Let us fix our eye on the "crown of glory which fadeth not away." Let us deliberately renounce this vain world, and take God for our only and all-sufficient portion. Whether on earth we are known or unknown—honored or despised, this one thing let us seek after—to secure the favor of God—to enjoy his presence—and at last to inherit his glorious kingdom.

Prayer.

Unsatisfying, O Lord our God, as the world is; still a strange infatuation exists within our hearts, which leads us to covet its distinctions and its pleasures. So far as thou

hast permitted us to test its power to produce happiness, we have been invariably disappointed. We have found it to be "vanity and vexation of spirit." Its sweetest pleasures have turned bitter in the enjoyment. Its loveliest scenery cannot charm us apart from thee; and its honors—so far as obtained—have proved but empty bubbles. Yet why, O Lord, do we still hanker after these vain delights? Why do we not learn to appreciate them truly? Come thou into our souls, with all thy fulness, and then will our hearts quickly bid adieu to them. Thou knowest that we are never satisfied—never happy—when we are not living to thee, and holding sweet communion with thee. Thou knowest how weary is the soul—though surrounded with earthly good—if God be not with us, or if we have failed to place thee first in our affection! Return then we will to our rest. We fly to thee our God once more; and do thou, O our heavenly Father, return unto us and dwell in us forever, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

MEDITATION VII.

THE INVITATION.

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. *Matt.* 11: 28.

Who is there to whom this invitation is not applicable? How few can be found, who do not "labor for that which satisfieth not," or who do not at times feel the burden of a guilty conscience? But there is a class for whom the kind compassionate Savior especially intended it. There are hearts subdued and softened by divine grace, which are yet still enveloped in darkness and oppressed with an inward weight of sorrow. They are personified in the "bruised reed and the smoking flax." From some inscrutable causes —traceable possibly to their physical constitution—they go

mourning as in sackcloth, considering that the promises—those well-springs of consolation—are not written for *them.* "O, ye afflicted, tossed with tempest and not comforted," listen to the sweet inviting voice of the Savior, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Is not this language suited to such as ye are? Can ye not venture to approach, and touch by faith "the hem of his garment?" Heavy as may be the load of guilt on the soul; do ye not remember that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin?" Dark as your path may be; do ye not know, that "he is the light of life?" High as the waves may rise, and loud as the winds may roar; does he not address your trembling soul, and say, "It is I, be not afraid?" He says, "I *will* give you rest." What thousands have ventured on this promise, and found the peace which they sought! "Go thou and do likewise." Let not unbelief—so dishonoring to Jesus—hold you back any longer. You have not to "ascend up into heaven to bring Christ down, nor to descend into the grave to bring him up again from the dead. His word is nigh;" yea, he himself is nigh unto thee. It is only to "believe in thy heart" the word which he has spoken, and light shall break in upon the soul. Haste, then, at the call of Jesus. Seek rest for thy troubled spirit no where else; for it is to be found in him alone.

Prayer.

Why, O Lord, are these hearts so slow to believe thy word, so reluctant to appropriate it? From the realms of light and glory thou didst come, veiling thy divinity in a fleshly form, suffering every extremity of pain and grief, yea even death itself, to redeem us, and yet we are tempted to entertain a guilty distrust of thee. We feel as if all this could not have been done and suffered for *us.* But, Lord, we know thy

word maketh no exceptions. It hath not singled us out and said, thy blood was not shed for us—thy promises were not for our comfort. O no; blessed be thy name, the sacrifice on Calvary was for sinners. The voice of invitation is to all who feel their sins. It is the "weary and heavy laden" whom thou hast invited to thy bosom. Why, then, may *we* not come? Weighed down with griefs and sorrows, we surely need the rest which thy pardoning mercy alone can confer. Unworthy as we are, we would venture to thy feet. O take away that unbelief which has been so long the barrier between thee and our souls. May we look out of ourselves—where all is so dark—and fix our gaze upon the cross, where all is radiant with the light of hope.

MEDITATION VIII.

ALL FOR THE BEST.

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called accor ling to his purpose. *Rom.* 8: 28.

The believer, when under the hidings of God's face, or when smarting under the rod of temporal distress, is often ready to say, "all these things are against me." Owing to the weakness of his faith, he concludes that "God has forgotten him." He forgets that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth"—that his Lord once said, "in the world ye shall have tribulation." To sink down under troubles, and conclude that there is no relief for us, is to distrust our Father's care—to doubt his everlasting love. It may not seem good to God, who orders each event of our lives, to grant us the prosperity which we naturally desire. He may discover in us

so much remaining depravity—developed in the forms of pride, sensuality, or self-seeking—as to make it necessary to visit us with the rod of correction. When that rod is intended to extirpate these sins, should we not be prepared to kiss it? Is it not designed to wean us from the world, and to drive us more closely to the bosom of eternal love? "All things"—including of course these very trials—" will work together for our good." Are we sick and suffering in body? Let us not despair. The affliction shall work for our good. Relief will come in due time; or if the sickness "be unto death," God can make it conducive to a calm or triumphant departure. Doubt not that his mercy is in it. Art thou poor, and apprehensive that thy wants may not be supplied? O trust in thy Father's care, who will " withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly." Do enemies beset thy path? God can change the bitterest of them into friends, or can defend and deliver thee from their ire. And what though all these afflictions press upon the soul at once, even then the promise is not nullified; it is only made the more precious. But remember that when heaven is attained, these sorrows will be felt no more forever.

Prayer.

How precious, O God, are thy promises! They apply to us, thy sinful and suffering children, under all circumstances. Thou hast declared, that of chastisement " all of us must be partakers;" that the way to thine abode is rough and thorny. Why, then, should we fear to walk in it? Why wish to tread a smooth and easy path? Our sufferings, we acknowledge, are caused by our sin. Instead of hating and suppressing, we have cherished it. Yes, we have known it to be offensive to thy pure eyes, and yet we have committed and recommitted it. Shouldst thou, O Lord, afflict us still more heavily, shouldst thou embitter our whole life with ag-

gravated suffering, and then cast us into hell; it would be but the just reward of our rebellion. But gracious Father, we come to plead for forgiveness through Jesus Christ. O, for his sake pardon us, and permit us to take hold of the promises and call them ours. Thou hast said that "all things shall work together for good to them that love thee." Grant that we may love thee, and have the evidences of that love, by "keeping thy commandments." Then may we "glory even in tribulations." Then, whatever be our earthly lot, joyous or sad, one sweet promise shall gild the darkest hours of our existence. We shall be cheered by the thought that "all things are working together for our good;" and when we have done and suffered thy will on earth, we shall be admitted to thy glory, to see thy face and to sing thy praises forever. Amen.

MEDITATION IX.

THE HEART OF UNBELIEF.

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. *Heb.* 3: 12.

The unbelief of the ancient Israelites is a beacon to all succeeding generations. For whilst Jehovah, by a miraculous symbol, was guiding them through the desert—feeding them also by miracle—and showing himself amidst the most sublime and over-powering visions, they were ever and anon forsaking him and turning to the worship of idols. Their conduct however is but an illustration of the wickedness of human nature generally. There was in them "an evil heart." This fully explains their conduct. But the same evil heart exists in *us*. The people of God, but partially sanctified, see and feel this secret depravity. It is the fruit-

ful source of all their misery. It fosters unbelief, a sin upon which God looks with peculiar abhorrence. O, this hateful unbelief! What Christian does not mourn over it, as the great barrier between God and the soul? Unbelief leads us to doubt sometimes even the existence of God. It is this which weakens our confidence in the precious truths of revelation. It is this which represents earth's pleasures as substantial, and heaven but as a fanciful vision. How does it paralyze every spiritual effort! How does it quench every spark of zeal, and drive us to a melancholy distance from God! Let us then take heed, lest this unbelief be found in us. O, let us cultivate a strong confidence in God! Let us live near the cross, and be much in the study of his word. Daily let us resort to the Savior with the petitions, "Lord, increase our faith," "Help, Lord, our unbelief." Since faith is the gift of God, let us earnestly wrestle for it. The more faith we have, the nearer shall we live to God. Unbelief drives us from him, but faith draws us to his arms.

Prayer.

We would bring these unbelieving hearts to thee, O God, and beseech thee, through Jesus Christ, to confirm our faith. O that we could have and retain a deep impression of thy perpetual presence! We would fain act under the constant belief that "thou God seest us." We desire that measure of faith which shall recognize thy presence in every created object, and thy direct agency in every event of our lives. Help us to believe unwaveringly in thy holy word;—to rely implicitly on all thy promises. Let not the adversary beget in us, distrust of thy providence, nor a doubt of thy sacred truth. May we receive all, however mysterious; and cast our souls upon thy testimonies. May we take hold of Christ as the sure, the only foundation; and let no influence of Satan, no secret depravity of the heart shake our hope and

trust in the gracious Mediator. Lord Jesus, increase our faith. Let us take thee as thou art offered in the gospel, to be our prophet, our priest, and our king. Yea we do now commit the keeping of our souls to thee. Weak indeed is our faith, yet it is enough—blessed be thy name—to enable us sincerely to do this. O root out from these hearts every unbelieving thought. Enthrone thyself within, and subdue our will to the obedience of the faith; and when faith is no more needed, may we see thee without a cloud to darken our vision, and dwell in thy redeeming love forever.

MEDITATION X.

TIME PRECIOUS.

Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. *Eph.* 5: 16.

Christians reflect, with sorrow and self-upbraiding, on the unprofitable and sinful manner in which much of their lives has been spent. Before the grace of God was revealed in us, how were our days and nights given to vanity! And even since we professed to be swayed by higher principles, how have we neglected or misimproved many of our opportunities for doing or for obtaining good! What progress in holiness might we have made, had we applied as frequently and as fervently to the throne of grace as we might have done? How much of divine truth might we have learned, had we studied as diligently and prayerfully as we might have done, the sacred record? How many souls might have been instructed—warned, and possibly saved, had we been as faithful as we ought to have been, in using the influence over others which providence has given to us? Alas, we must acknowledge, that in all things we have come short.

Our days have been days of evil. How can we look back upon the past without shame and contrition? Much precious time has been lost. Yes, it is gone, never to return. The opportunities for usefulness which have been lost, are lost forever. There is only one way in which time can be redeemed. It is by seizing the present moments and consecrating them all to God. It is by beginning at once, and in good earnest, to labor for the salvation of souls. In this way alone can we redeem the time.

Prayer.

O God, we mourn over time lost, yea murdered in sinful pleasures or in guilty indolence. We have been for the most part only "cumbering the ground;" and justly might we have been cut down, and made the monuments of thy severe displeasure. But O, for the sake of thy dear Son, spare us a little longer. "Hide thy face from our sins and blot out all our iniquities." Let not our past unfaithfulness provoke thee to destroy us. Give us grace, that we may commence anew thy service, and consecrate every power we possess to the great work of salvation. We renewedly give ourselves away to thee, O Lord. May what remains of life be devoted to thy service. Show us what thou wouldst have us to do. Make the path of duty plain before our face. Let thy holy providence open before us fields of usefulness, and thy grace dispose us and enable us to enter them, and faithfully to labor until thou shalt call us to our account; and then acknowledging ourselves but "unprofitable servants," we will hope for thine approval, and for an admission to the joys of thy kingdom, solely for the sake of Jesus our Savior. Amen.

MEDITATION XI.

GRATITUDE.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.
Psalm 103: 2.

There is no duty more delightful than that of praise. The Psalms of David are replete with it. His devotions ofttimes consisted wholly in it. At one time, he breaks forth in the ecstatic language, "O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him; sing psalms unto him; talk ye of all his wondrous works." At another he calls upon all creation, animate and inanimate, to assist him in praising Jehovah's great and glorious name; and concludes by saying, "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord." But how seldom do we imitate this pious bard in his holy work! Alas, we live not, I fear, as near to the mercy-seat as he did, nor do we breathe so much of the atmosphere of heaven. Else why have our devotions so much of the slavish, and so little of the filial spirit in them? Were a kind earthly parent to be hourly bringing us new tokens of his favor, should we not express our gratitude for such favors? Why then are we not found praising our heavenly Father, "who daily loadeth us with benefits," and "who giveth us richly all things to enjoy?" O, the very exuberance and constancy of his gifts seem, in some instances, to harden the heart. Ungrateful man! Often do days and weeks pass away marked by this guilty forgetfulness. And is it possible, that we can forget that Being "in whom we live and move"—whose hand is open to satisfy our every reason-

able desire, and to whose protecting care we owe our safety? Above all, can we forget the love which he has bestowed upon us, in giving his dear Son to die for our sins; or the compassion which that Savior has manifested in dying to redeem us? Never, never let us forget these infinite favors. Let us pour forth our praises unceasingly to God and to the Lamb. Let us adopt the language of David and sing, "Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits." Let us ask ourselves, morning, noon, and night, at the close of the week, month, or year, what common and special favors we have received; and whilst we humble ourselves for our sins, let us, in exalted strains, praise the Lord for his unmerited mercies.

Prayer.

O Lord God, we have been prone to overlook the innumerable favors wherewith thou hast daily crowned our lives. It is "in thee that we live and move." Not the exertion of a muscle can be made without thee. Why then have we not habitually recognized thy upholding hand in the continuance of our forfeited lives? O, pardon thy servants for this; and let us hereafter cease not to praise thee, "in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways." Thou dost also provide us with food and raiment. All nature is a vast storehouse for the supply of our wants. And yet too seldom have we eaten our "bread with gladness and singleness of heart." Through what troubles hast thou carried us! From what billows of adversity hast thou rescued us! In what perils hast thou guarded us! Ten thousand thousand mercies have fallen around our paths; and O, above all, and as if to crown all, thou hast given thine only begotten Son; and hast sweetly constrained us to accept of salvation. Thou hast been our guide through all our weary pilgrimage. In darkness thou hast been our light; in sorrow our consolation; in despondency our only trust and stay. And shall we forget all these benefits? Shall we, in view of them,

refuse to praise thee? O, forgive our past ingratitude. Touch these cold, unfeeling hearts with thy grace; soften them into penitence; and awake in them a permanent feeling of gratitude and love; for the sake of our Advocate and Redeemer. Amen.

MEDITATION XII.

THE PROMISED SPIRIT.

But if I depart I will send him [the Comforter] unto you.
John 16: 7.

How consolatory is the language of our Lord to his desponding disciples! He had intimated to them the necessity of his departure. The crisis had come when he must "lay down his life for his sheep," and go to possess his mediatorial throne in heaven. But they were overwhelmed at the thought of losing their compassionate master. They had entertained sanguine expectations as to an earthly kingdom, and they had supposed that its honors and distinctions would naturally fall to themselves. They had, however, a still deeper foundation for their sorrow. They dearly loved their Lord—nay more, they adored him as "God manifest in the flesh." And must they now part with him? The thought is agony. But Jesus had a word of consolation suited to their feelings. He speaks of the expediency of his departure—in view of the completion of his great work, which includes the descent of the Spirit, as well as the sacrifice on the cross. "If I depart," says Jesus, "I will send him unto you." And soon this blessed Comforter came according to promise, to assuage their grief—to

inspire them with heavenly gifts—to fill them with holy boldness—to pour light into their minds—and to sustain them under all their labors and persecutions. Still does the same divine Agent dwell with the people of God. Yes, though with our bodily eyes, we no longer see Jesus, yet does the Spirit, "receive of Christ's, and show it unto us." It is through the Holy Spirit, that we catch an occasional glimpse of Immanuel's glory. When, at times, our strength has failed, and deep depression has seized upon us, have we not, by the Holy Comforter, been lifted up and restored to the light of God's countenance? The Holy Spirit dwells in us, if we are the children of God. "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost." And does this heavenly guest indeed dwell in such polluted hearts as ours? How careful then should we be, lest by pride or some hateful lust, we grieve him away! Let us, with holy jealousy, watch against any rival which may come to dispute with him the possession of our hearts. Let us remember the exhortation, "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

Prayer.

O divine Spirit, promised by the Savior, and given through his intercession, come, dwell in these polluted hearts to subdue and to sanctify them! The heavens have received our Lord, but thou hast come to reveal him to our faith. "Glorify him; receiving of his, and showing it unto us." Earnestly we desire to know more of Immanuel—we would be ravished with his beauties. We long to see him clothed in that resplendent glory which irradiated him on the mount of transfiguration. But if *that* be too blissful a revelation, for such unworthy sinners; at least show him unto us, bowed beneath his sufferings, and enable us to weep over sin, the cause of all those sufferings. Blessed Comforter, take

possession of us, and dwell in our hearts forever. We would be thy consecrated temples. Expel, we beseech thee, every polluting image—purify every unhallowed affection; and, by thy grace, make us a fit residence for thyself. We would be wholly sanctified; for only *then*, shall we be supremely blessed. Pardon the many sins whereby we have so often grieved thee, and may we henceforth be vessels of honor, purified by thy indwelling, for the master's use. Grant this, O Lord, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

MEDITATION XIII.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

For the love of Christ constraineth us. 2 *Cor.* 5: 14

The love of Christ! What a motive to one who has felt its constraining influence! Can we say that we have not only experienced the love of Christ to us; but have felt in return the outgoings of love to our blessed Savior? The apostle Peter could appeal ingenuously to his Lord and say, "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." Impelled by this love, he went forth boldly proclaiming the gospel, and enduring cheerfully, for Christ's sake, persecution and death. Paul also was constrained by it to offer himself a living sacrifice unto God. It bore him above all his trials. It was the fountain of his joy, and the impulse of his zeal. Let us inquire, then, how much influence this love of Christ has had over us? Has it led us to practice self-denial for Jesus' sake? Has it fed the flame of our devotions? Has it been the secret spring of our charities? Do we daily go up to Calvary, and study our obligations at

the foot of the cross? See, on that cross, the adorable Savior! Behold him, who is the equal of the Father, stretched in bleeding agony—expiring under an inconceivable weight of sorrow, to redeem us wretched, guilty men! All this he does to rescue us from sin and from hell—to create us "heirs of God"—to purchase for us "an inheritance that is incorruptible." And what have we ever done for him? Let us weep, that we have made such returns of ingratitude and sin. Let us renew our vows at the foot of the cross. O let us go forth to our work with increased diligence. Short may be the time that is left us to labor for our Lord. Soon may we be called to our account. Be it ours, to say with Paul, "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

Prayer.

O, our adorable Savior, when we reflect on thy matchless love, which led thee first to pity us, then to come into this polluted world to redeem us; when we think of all which thou hast done and suffered for us sinful worms; we are lost in wonder, and we cannot find language to express our obligations. But O, what poor returns have we made for all this love and compassion! Well might we bury our faces in the dust; nor, but for thy mercy, could we venture to look up to thee, whom we have "crucified afresh." 'Twas not enough that the sins of our unregenerate state were laid upon thee; we have added to that oppressive load, by sinning against love and mercy; dying love and boundless mercy. Yet doth thy love, Savior, overtop all these mountains of iniquity. It says "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee." Let this love reach and melt our obdurate hearts. Let it constrain us to "live, not to ourselves, but to thee, who hast died for us and risen again;" and whilst the children of this world are laboring to aggrandize

self, let us, forgetful of self, be absorbed in the work of glorifying our Master. "For us to live may it be Christ." When we can no longer glorify thee on earth—then, O our Savior, let us have a place in that bright world where love—that grace which outlives faith and hope—shall endure forever.

MEDITATION XIV.

THE CONTRAST.

There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. *Ps.* 4: 6.

How unsatisfying is all sublunary good! Such must be the exclamation of every honest heart. Yet should we infer, from the eagerness and untiring diligence with which worldly pleasure is pursued, that it must bring to its possessor entire satisfaction. But do the votaries of the world find the good which their imaginations had pictured? Is there no disappointment—no draw-back in their bliss? Does not the soul secretly ask, if this is all? Do they not exclaim, under their disappointment, "Who will show us any good?" O ye worldlings, ye sensual, grovelling souls, do ye not know that ye were made for the enjoyment of higher and purer bliss? Do ye not reflect that your immortal nature can never be satisfied with the good which ye are pursuing? Go to the Christian, and learn where the true source of happiness lies. He has a joy that is unspeakable. It consists in the light of God's countenance. His prayer is, "Lord, lift upon us the light of thy countenance." Such bliss cannot be yours until, forsaking your "broken cisterns," you turn to "the fountain of living waters." The

Psalmist declares, that the light of Jehovah's countenance affords to the believer more real joy, than does the increase of worldly substance to the avaricious. Let us inquire, then, if this is the case with us, if the light of God's countenance is desired more strongly than the influx of wealth and honor? Is it our daily prayer, as we see others struggling for earthly gain, "Lord, lift upon *us* the light of thy countenance?" How beautiful the allusion! As when, after a night of darkness, the dawning rays appear, chasing the gloom—or as when through the murky cloud, spreading its thick folds around, the full-orbed sun is seen bursting with its cheering light; so, O God, let thy reviving smiles fall on our dark and troubled souls! Let us but enjoy the light of God's countenance, and we can sing in the absence of every other good. It is this which can cheer the abodes of poverty—which can gild the darkest path of sorrow—which can make the heaviest burdens seem light—and which, when the vale of death is in view, can prove an undying lamp, to light the soul in triumph across it.

Prayer.

O God, the fountain of happiness, we rejoice that in Christ Jesus, thou art reconciling the world unto thyself. Be thou reconciled, we beseech thee, to us. Let us approach thee with the confidence of children. No merits of our own have we to plead. Our holiest services are polluted. O look upon the face of thine anointed, and for his sake look graciously upon us. Lord, we have sinned in attempting to find our happiness in things below. Forsaking thee, "the fountain of living waters," we have turned to "broken cisterns which can hold no water." Our supreme affections ought ever to have been fixed on thyself. Then should our souls have found a satisfying portion. Thou hast taught us, by experience, the emptiness and vanity of this world's

pleasures. When we have had the fullest measure of them, they have appeared most vain. Thou, O God, art the only satisfying portion of the soul. Separated from thee—shut out from the light of thy countenance, we must be wretched. It is hell to be removed from thy presence, though surrounded by all that earth can give. It is heaven to enjoy thee, though bereft of all besides. Oh then "lift upon us the light of thy countenance,"—grant us one sweet approving smile, that shall assure us of thy everlasting love for Jesus' sake. Amen.

My Jesus, thou hast taught
This heart to love but thee ;
The sweetest joys of earth are fraught
With emptiness to me.

If sorrow shades my eyes,
It is when thou art fled ;
Deep in the dust my spirit lies,
And mourns its comforts dead.

The world has lost its power
To soothe this inward pain ;
To me it is a faded flower,
That cannot bloom again.

But when thy smile appears,
To chase this gloom away ;
How bursts my song—how sink my fears !
My night is turned to day.

Then, Lord, no more permit
This heart from thee to rove ;
O that I may forever sit
At thy dear feet, and love !

MEDITATION XV.

THE REFUGE.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.
Psalm 46: 1.

"Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards." The world in which we dwell is but "a vale of tears." Sin has caused these tears to flow; and every sinner must, sooner or later, pour in *his* contribution of personal grief, to swell the general tide of sorrows. The domestic circle must be invaded by the ruthless hand of death. Wealth may abound one day, to be succeeded by poverty the next; or even if retained, may prove a source of anxiety and temptation to its possessor. In short, all must drink of the bitter cup. Is it not wise then to provide against the months that are *now*, or that are drawing nigh, when we are obliged to say "we have no pleasure in them." Alas; the poor sinner, who finds all his happiness in the things of earth; when these are gone, has nothing left. He has no shelter from the storm. It must beat upon his naked head. But not so the Christian. He can say, under the severest afflictions, "God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." O what an unspeakable blessing to have an almighty support! How calming to the soul in the dark hour of adversity, to be able to pour all its sorrows into the bosom of God! When death has seemed to hover over us, to aim his shafts at us or ours, what sweet consolation have we found in God! In "the secret place of the Most High," we have been able to dwell safely. When the world without has been covered with gloom, all has been sunshine *within*. When the power of

the tempter has overwhelmed us, the arm of Jesus has lifted us up and pointed out a way of escape. Whatever then are our trials, let us still trust in God. Away, ye dark, unbelieving thoughts! "God is a present help;" and "though he slay us, yet will we trust in him." His promise is—whatever is our situation, "my grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

Prayer.

O God, it is the hour of darkness. "Fearfulness and trembling have come upon us, and horror hath overwhelmed us." Whither can we look but unto thee? What now can be our support but thy precious promises? Thou hast declared thyself to be "a refuge" to thy people—"their present help in trouble." Often have thy servants experienced the truth of this comforting declaration. When trouble, and sorrow, fear and anxiety, have taken hold upon them, they have fled to this sweet refuge. They have poured out their souls unto thee, and thou hast helped them in the time of their distress. Thou hast calmed their rising fears, and enabled them to resign every event into thy hands. What peace hath then pervaded their souls! Let thy merciful loving kindness then visit us in this hour of our tribulation. Hide not thy face from us. "Put not thy servants away in anger." O speak peace to our troubled spirits. Hide us under the shadow of thy wings "till these calamities be overpast." Strengthen our faith to take a firm hold of thy promises, and let no vicissitudes of this life, no threatening dangers shake our confidence in thee or in thy declarations, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our hope and our Redeemer. Amen.

MEDITATION XVI.

PRAYER HINDERED.

Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. *James* 4: 3.

It is important to investigate the spirit with which we pray, as well as to inquire into the subject matter of our petitions. We may pray earnestly, and for things in themselves lawful; but the motive which actuates to the duty may be wrong. We may ask for health; not that when received, it may be devoted to God; but that we may be enabled more perfectly to enjoy our earthly pleasures. We may ask for temporal prosperity in general, simply because we naturally shrink from suffering, and covet enjoyment. We may even pray for more of the sensible joys of religion, because of the mere pleasurable excitement which accompanies them. Alas, our prayers are too often exclusively selfish. The glory of God has but little to do with them. Not seldom do we mutter over a form, whilst the heart is wandering and cold. When we have finished, we scarcely know for what we have been praying, nor reflect on the dread majesty of the being whom we have addressed. The sins of our holy things are not the least of our transgressions. How offensive in the sight of Heaven must have been many of our prayers! Truly we need not wonder, that they are not oftener answered. "We ask, and receive not, because we ask amiss." O, for more of the spirit of prayer! Why do we not oftener avail ourselves of our precious privilege of coming to the mercy seat? May we not there disburden our souls? May we not invoke the divine presence to at-

tend us on our pilgrimage. May we not draw upon his fulness, even "grace for grace?" Has he not said, "draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you?" Is not the mercy seat always accessible? Hear his inviting voice. "Ask, and ye shall receive." Have we not also an "Advocate with the Father," to present our prayers? Only let us ask aright, and the blessing shall be ours. Let our prayers be importunate—sincere—submissive—with faith in the promises—preferred in Jesus' name; and above all, having reference to the glory of God, and we cannot doubt that God will hear and answer them.

Prayer.

O spirit of holiness, breathe into our souls the true feelings of devotion! It is thy merciful prerogative to help our infirmities. We are bowed down greatly. Our iniquities are so great that we cannot look up. O lead us to a believing view of the atoning Lamb. Let us feel him to be our strength, and let us see in him our pardon and our righteousness. Often, alas, have we prayed with our lips whilst our hearts have been far from God. The remembrance of such prayers fills us with shame and confusion of face. Often too have we asked for blessings from motives which thou couldst not approve; and sometimes, we fear, even that we might "consume them on our lusts." O God, forgive us this great iniquity. Draw us once more to thee, and fill us with the spirit of supplications. Teach us how to pray, and what to pray for. Let us wrestle as did Jacob—let us sigh and mourn as did Hannah—let us repent and pray as did the publican. May we "come boldly," yet humbly, "to the throne of grace, and obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." May we have such frequent and such delightful communion with thee, that prayer shall be our daily bread; that like Enoch we may walk with God. Amen.

MEDITATION XVII.

DIVINE GUIDANCE.

Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? *Acts* 9: 6.

How often is the path of duty involved in obscurity which nothing but light from heaven can dissipate! But it is the believer's privilege to implore the God of all grace to point out to him the way in which he should go. As to practical religion, there is a general course or tenor of feeling and action which is comparatively plain. In all ordinary circumstances the word of God will, by its precepts and counsels, indicate the path of duty. "By taking heed thereto," we cannot go wrong. If, for example, we are tempted to distrust Providence, by an undue anxiety as to the supply of earthly good which we need; we may learn, from our Savior's declaration, to be no longer of "a doubtful mind;" but to trust *Him* who "clothes the grass of the field, and feeds the fowls of the air." Are we prone to anticipate evil of any kind? Let us remember that the same authority says, "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Are we in doubt how we should feel towards one who has injured us, or who has forfeited our esteem? The clear response from the Bible is, "Charity hopeth all things." "Forgive every one his trespasses." "Heap coals of fire"—that is tokens of love—"upon his head." But often with the believer, there are seasons of deep perplexity and distressing anxiety as to what he shall do; when he cannot so clearly discern the path in which he should tread. His way is often actually hedged up. Like the Israelites on the Egyptian side of the Red Sea, he

seems completely environed with difficulties. What now shall he do? If he can do nothing else, he can with Paul give himself to prayer. "Lord, what wilt *thou* have me to do?" should be his earnest cry. Yet let him understand, that this sense of dependence on God exempts him not from the obligation to make every effort possible, to know the path of duty, and to do the will of God. Every *lawful* means to understand the leadings of providence must be resorted to; and then prayer may be offered in the confident expectation that God will say to us, in a language intelligible to a pious heart, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

Prayer.

Lord, the petition which the subdued and broken-hearted Saul offered—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" thou didst quickly answer, instructing him both what to do and where to go. Art thou not equally ready to impart to us thy servants a knowledge of our path of duty? We have consecrated to thee our souls and our bodies. Having vowed to be thine; we stand prepared to obey thy call; to labor for thy glory; when and where thou shalt see fit to employ us. We ask no higher honor than to be engaged, until our dying day, in advancing our blessed Redeemer's kingdom, and in promoting thy glorious designs on earth. Lord, in what way may we most effectually subserve this great object? Where wouldst thou have us to go, and what wouldst thou have us to do? In all that respects present duty, let us clearly understand thy will. Give us grace, O Lord, to discharge that duty. May we not stand, like the servants in the market-place, "all the day idle." May we not indulge in spiritual reverie as to future opportunities or more favorable circumstances; but, looking around us upon the fields already white unto the harvest, may we at once enter upon our labors and prove faithful even unto death. Help us to be watchful of the occasions of usefulness which thy providence affords, and so to improve them as that, at last, we

may be saluted with the welcome, "well done, good and faithful servants." Enable us to do thy will, in the subjugation of our own evil nature—in bearing the cross—in "seeking not our own, but the things which are Jesus Christ's;" and whilst laboring in the work of personal piety, may we be equally zealous in efforts to save from death the souls of our fellow men, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

MEDITATION XVIII.

THE SEARCHER OF HEARTS.

For the Lord seeth not as man seeth. 1 *Sam.* 16: 7.

In our judgment of men we are very often deceived. Being able to look only on the outward appearance, we cannot always understand their principles and feelings. From seeing them in situations not calculated to develop their peculiar characters, we cannot say how they would act in different circumstances. But it is the prerogative of God to look on the heart. His eye searches deep into the soul. He knows perfectly every thing that passes there; and He can decide with certainty how a man will act in all the circumstances in which he can be placed. Go where we may, and do *what* we may, that omniscient eye rests upon our heart, and perceives the incipient emotion and desire even before they are known to ourselves. What a startling thought is this to the guilty bosom? How would that bosom shrink and tremble, were that eye, in visible fire, to glare upon it at every step of its career! But does it not really behold us in public and in private? Has it not followed us through life and marked our every feeling? O that we could henceforth act under the sentiment, "thou

God seest me." When we are alone, let us remember, that *really* we are not alone; that God is there. When the tempter assails us in solitude; let us look up, and see the eye of God fixed upon us, and hear his voice calling us to resistance. When we offer in public or in private the prayer that savors of insincerity, let us remember that what may appear as sincere devotion in the eyes of men, may be but the sacrifice of the wicked, which is "an abomination to the Lord." O let us remember that God cannot be deceived, neither will he be mocked. Let us have "truth in the inward parts;" and be willing, as David was, to be searched even as to our thoughts; so that "if there be any wicked way in us, God may lead us in the way everlasting."

Prayer.

Omniscient God! "Thou knowest our down-sitting and our up-rising, thou understandest our thought afar off." Not our outward conduct only, but the most secret feelings of our bosoms lie open to thine eye. Thou hast followed us with thy keen inspection in all our devious wanderings. We tremble to reflect on the many secret as well as open sins which thou hast marked against us. How have these hearts been festering with pollution, even when to human view our conduct may have been unblamable! O Lord, we are not to be "judged by man's judgment." "Man looketh on the outward appearance." We are to be weighed in *thy* balances. Thou requirest purity of heart. Thou canst not look upon sin but with abhorrence. Wherewithal then shall we come before thee? In the language of penitence would we exclaim, "Have mercy upon us, O Lord, according to thy loving kindness, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out our transgressions. Wash us thoroughly from our iniquities, and cleanse us from our sin. Create in us a clean heart, O God, and

renew a right spirit within us." "Cleanse thou us from secret faults." Let us henceforth live and act, "as seeing thee who art invisible." In all our plans—in all our private meditations—in every act of devotion may a sense of thy presence overawe us. O may we not seek to please men but God; and may we ever act in compliance with our duty towards thee. May "integrity and uprightness preserve us;" and may we be numbered among the "Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile." This we implore for the sake of Jesus our Redeemer. Amen.

MEDITATION XIX.

PRAYER IN JESUS' NAME.

Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. *John* 16: 24.

Blessed indeed were those disciples who sat at the Savior's feet! Did they want counsel; he was at hand to furnish it. Did they need more knowledge in relation to the kingdom of God; he, their all-wise master, was willing to impart it. Were they destitute of the comforts of life; he, though apparently indifferent to them himself, was ever ready to work a miracle to supply their necessities. On him they constantly leaned for support. From him they hoped for succor in all times of trouble. What then could they do, if he should depart from them? He tells them what they *must* do—they must pray. "Hitherto," says Jesus, "ye have asked nothing in my name." Ye have looked *directly* to me. Now look *through* me as mediator to the Father. My name is henceforth to be the precious passport to the mercy-seat. If ye make mention of my

name in your supplications, my Father will supply your wants. How consolatory, how encouraging this promise! Nor was it made to those disciples *only*. It was for *all* believers. "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." Go, then, to the mercy-seat in Jesus' name. Take it as the precious seal which God the Father will recognize, and thereby admit you to a participation of the blessings of his grace. Would you have the "joy unspeakable," and be filled with it? Go, plead for it, in the name of Jesus. He ever lives as our intercessor at the right hand of God; and the feeble petitions which flow from our faltering tongues and polluted lips, if offered with faith in his name, shall be rendered acceptable through him, our Advocate and High Priest. "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Prayer.

O, most merciful Father, taught by thy only Son to approach thee in supplication for spiritual blessings, we come in his name, and plead his merits as the only ground of acceptance. Vile and polluted, we are not worthy to direct our eyes upwards to thy mercy-seat. Jesus alone is worthy. He is the unspotted Lamb; and his blood has flowed to give our souls access to thee. Receive our prayer, O gracious God, for Jesus' sake; and grant our souls the blessings which we need. We would fain repent of every transgression; and we long to feel the joys of pardoned sin. O give us repentance unto life; give us that faith which worketh by love, purifieth the heart, and overcometh the world. Bestow it, O Father, for it is thy gift. Under its influence, enable us to obtain the victory over every spiritual enemy. O for more love to thee! Let it be the governing impulse in the discharge of every duty. Give us also love to thy dear children. May thy people be our people. May their persons

and their reputations be dear unto us. May we love thy kingdom. O may its interests be uppermost in our affections and our labors. Gracious Father, implant in us every Christian grace. Let our joy be the joy of thy people. Let it be pure, spiritual, and full. Whilst others are rejoicing in the increase of their gains, or in the possession of sensual pleasure, may our happiness be kindled at a purer source; may it come from the light of thy countenance, and the indwelling of thy Holy Spirit. We ask all in Jesus' name. Amen.

MEDITATION XX.

REVIVAL.

Wilt thou not revive us again; that thy people may rejoice in thee? *Ps.* 85: 6.

When the Holy Spirit is poured upon believers, there is great joy among them. Whatever earthly comforts they may have valued or coveted, all seem to be forgotten in the joy which is connected with the revival of their Christian graces. When coldness and stupidity are upon the church, her members lose in a great measure their relish for divine things. The world comes in like a flood, and they are more or less swept away on its powerful current. They become conformed criminally to its spirit and fashions. The light of the divine countenance is withdrawn from them; and impenitent sinners, emboldened in sin by their loose example, rush madly on in the road to death. How sad is such a state of spiritual declension! How dishonoring to God! How ruinous to the soul! But God, who is rich in mercy, does not forsake his saints even though they, for a season, forsake him. For his own glory he will and does bring

them to repentance. He bids them return from their backslidings. He fills them with shame and self-abhorrence in view of their sins. He renews within them the love which they breathed forth in ardent vows when first they gave themselves to his service. Then do they again rejoice in God. The world once more loses its attraction. Communion with God is again realized and relished. The mercy-seat is frequented. The souls of sinners are viewed as precious. Then is offered "the effectual fervent prayer which availeth much." The light of God's countenance is restored, and multitudes are brought into the kingdom of Christ. Who would not pray for such a glorious season? Who can be content to lie stupid and dead, far from God and happiness, when such a change may be wrought by prayer? Who can consent to fold his arms in idleness, to behold sinners dropping into perdition, God's name and cause dishonored, and his own soul deprived of spiritual joy, when God is ready to revive his work, and to restore to his people the joy of his salvation?

Prayer.

O Lord, when first thy grace was revealed to us, how new, how strange, yet how delightful were the emotions? Darkness fled, and the true light shined into our souls. The oppressive burden of sin was taken off. Our spirits walked unencumbered, breathing the air and enjoying the liberty of thy children. The days then flew away swiftly and happily, spent in delightful communion with thee, or in efforts to bring others to the knowledge of thy salvation. But O merciful Father, a thousand vanities have courted our attention, and a thousand earthly cares engrossed our souls. Satan and our own evil hearts have combined to rob us of our peace, and our spiritual joys have fled. Thou hast made us to see and feel that we have "an evil heart of unbelief in

departing from the living God." O, if we have thus wounded thy cause, or indirectly even been the means of injury to souls, may we be brought to realize our guilt, to repent of our backslidings; and through thy boundless mercy, may we obtain forgiveness. "O Lord, revive thy work." For the sake of thy cause, for the glory of thy name, for the honor of thy truth, Lord revive us. May we no longer be stumbling-blocks, nor bring a reproach upon that dear name by which we are called. May we engage heartily in efforts to promote the kingdom of our Lord. O let thy Holy Spirit come upon thy people. Let great searchings of heart be experienced. Let the hypocrite be surprised, the stupid aroused, the sinner convicted, and the disconsolate comforted; yea, "let thy kingdom come," for Jesus' sake. Amen.

MEDITATION XXI.

PURITY.

How shall we that are dead unto sin live any longer therein? *Rom.* 6: 2.

To say that a believer is dead unto sin is using strong language. Though not literally true, it implies much more than most Christians are willing to believe. Not the most holy can assert perfection. There still lives in the heart a depraved tendency, upon which Satan and the world are constantly acting to draw us away from God. But the sincere disciple of Jesus keeps a watchful eye upon this inward foe and these outward temptations. He stands girded by grace to resist these evil influences. He may be said, therefore, to be dead to the practice or enjoyment of sin. He does not allow it even a parley. He holds it in utter detestation, and he has declared against it an extermi-

nating warfare. When off his guard, sin and Satan may occasionally surprise him, and obtain a temporary advantage over him ; but he is still no less the enemy of sin ; and he returns to the attack with redoubled energy. This is being dead unto sin. Who can say, in sincerity, that such is his own condition? Are the enjoyments of the world, the haunts of pleasure, the delights of carnal indulgence, all abandoned as objects unworthy of the heart's affections? Have they ceased habitually to influence us? Is our "life hid with Christ in God?" Is our "conversation in heaven?" False and unfounded is *their* claim to discipleship, who are eagerly pursuing this world—searching it through and through for a little happiness. Hypocritical and vain is *his* hope who lives in sin—who allows his imagination to be polluted by it—his affections to be swayed by it—his desires to be governed by it. No ; it is the "pure in heart" alone, who shall "see God." "Nothing that defileth" shall ever enter into the celestial city.

Prayer.

To be freed from sin, O God, is our most earnest prayer. We perceive it to be that "abominable thing which thou hatest." It was sin which ruined our race. It was sin which crucified thy own dear Son. It is the source of all our misery. And yet are we daily chargeable with its commission. What shall we say unto thee in view of our oft-repeated transgressions? We would fall down before thy face, and exclaim with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." But, O Lord, it is not forgiveness alone we seek ; our chief desire is that we may be thoroughly purified from the hateful influence of sin. "Create our nature pure within." Eradicate the very principle of depravity. "Search us, O God, and see if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting." By profes-

sion we have become "dead unto sin." Our vows and resolutions are to contend against it, under every form which it may assume. And thou knowest that we *do* abhor it; and that we abhor ourselves on account of it; that we "delight in thy law after the inward man." O then grant that we may be more and more purified by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, until our bodies shall become temples hallowed by and meet for his perpetual residence; and at last may we, through grace, reach that pure and glorious rest which no sin or sorrow can invade; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

MEDITATION XXII.

CONDESCENDING MERCY.

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. *Is.* 1: 18.

What infinite condescension is it in the great Jehovah to hold intercourse with mortals! But when it is considered that these mortals are rebels against his laws and government, the astonishment is heightened. He not only thus condescends, but he even entreats his wandering creatures to come back to his arms. He declares himself willing to reason with them. He is prepared to pardon all their transgressions, if they will but repent and seek his mercy. But O, says the conscience-smitten sinner, how can God forgive *me*? My sins are too great. There is none so vile. There is no guilt of such crimson dye as mine. There is in *my* case a peculiar aggravation. It seems as if divine mercy could not reach it. All this that thou sayest of the enormity of thy guilt may be true. But dost thou not add

to thy sin, by denying the efficacy of Jesus' blood? Hast thou calculated the value of those big drops which bedewed Gethsemane? Hast thou measured the depth of those woes which Jesus endured on the cross? "*His* blood," remember, "cleanseth from all sin." The Father hath "laid on" his holy Son "the iniquity of us all." Hence it is that we are so cordially invited to come and reason the case with him. Come, says he, show thy heavy account—present thy crimson guilt—and I will, for Jesus' sake, cancel it all. The blood of the atoning Lamb is an all-sufficient equivalent. Only bow thy soul in the dust, confess thy aggravated sins, turn from them with all thy heart, and Jesus shall answer for thee at the bar of eternal justice.

Prayer.

From thy exalted throne, O God, thou hast stooped to notice and to pity us fallen creatures. Thou hast even put forth thy hand to reclaim us. Justly mightest thou have launched against us the fiery bolts of thy indignation. Had no atoning Lamb been provided—no precious blood been spilt—no voice of mercy sounded in our ears, still wouldest thou have been "holy, just, and good." We should then have been abandoned to the darkness which we chose, and which we loved. But O thou compassionate Father, thou hadst from eternity designs of love and mercy. Thou didst provide redemption through thy Son Jesus Christ. Spurned as has been this gracious way of salvation, it is still offered to us. Thy language is, "Come now," sinner, "and let us reason together." To this gracious invitation we respond. Lord, we come. We come in our shame and guilt, to cast ourselves at thy feet, and acknowledge ourselves to be among the vilest of sinners. Our guilt is indeed of crimson dye; but since thou hast promised to cleanse it away, we venture in the name of the atoning Lamb to plead for thy mercy. O Lord, pardon. O Lord, purify. May the Holy Spirit seal our forgiveness, and take up his dwelling in our souls.

May our repentance be deep and sincere. May our faith in the merits of Jesus be unwavering. May it work by love and purify our hearts. O for inward purity! O for the "clean heart," and the "right spirit."

MEDITATION XXIII.

POVERTY OF SPIRIT.

Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. *Matt.* 5: 3.

Poverty is almost always associated in our thoughts with misery. Yet are the poor often happier than the rich. If they possess fewer comforts, they have also fewer cares and fewer causes of vexation. But poverty of *spirit* is attended *always* with happiness. It may be possessed by the rich or the poor. It implies that the soul is meek and lowly. It indicates the absence of vain glory. It says, "however pure in the eyes of others, in *my own* I am the vilest of the vile." No boasting of what it has done or felt, no high-sounding pretensions, rare experiences, or censorious judgment of others, characterize it. It is in a good measure emptied of self. It has no store-house of good works. It lives daily, *hourly*, on the grace of God. With implicit trust it follows Jesus. When hungry it asks him for food; or when naked, asks him for clothing. It resists not when attacked; revenges not when injured; when abused, reviles not. It prays for its enemies. It is more anxious to approve itself to *God*, than to be approved of *men*. Its devotions are in retirement. It loves more the closet than the conspicuous assembly. Its holiest works

are esteemed unworthy to appear before God. Its very tears, it desires to have washed in the blood of Jesus. Grace, grace is its only hope; and the cross its only boast. For such a spirit, is the kingdom of heaven provided. Yes, in yonder bright regions—whatever may be its condition in this world—there are fitted up for it, mansions of rest, where it will enjoy God forever, and sing without interruption the sweet songs of redemption; ascribing all glory and honor to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb forever.

Prayer.

O God, if in these hearts of ours, thy searching eyes discover the workings of pride, or the existence of self-righteousness, do thou in mercy eradicate them, and give us the meek and lowly heart. We are sensible that we cannot stand the test of thy scrutiny. Our depravity is constantly manifesting itself even to our *own* eyes. In no form does it more frequently appear than in that of pride. And O how wretched is the heart of pride! But when, through grace, we can lie low in our own esteem; when we are enabled to keep down self and exalt thee, the Lord our God; then are we indeed happy. Then does spiritual joy abound; and we are permitted to have a foretaste of the kingdom of heaven. O give us then such discoveries of thy character and of our own—let us see thy glory in such a light, that like Job, we shall "abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes." It is poverty of spirit that we need. We would be "clothed with humility." O that we might in this respect be likened to our adorable Savior! Sweet was the spirit which our Lord exhibited, when he washed his disciples' feet. May we be willing to wash the feet of the meanest of our brethren. "Esteeming others better than ourselves," and looking upon ourselves as most vile, may we "condescend to men of low degree," and always rather serve than be served. Thus, not only shall we have sweet peace within; but we shall give evidence of possessing the spirit of him who

"came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." And this we ask for Jesus' sake. Amen.

MEDITATION XXIV.

FIXED DESTINY.

He that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still. *Rev.* 22: 11.

How solemn is the thought, that at death, not only will the soul meet its doom, but *that doom* will be irreversible. Then must we appear before our Judge without disguise. No time will then be allowed to dress the soul for the solemn scene. He that has "sowed to the flesh" will then reap his dread reward, in the condemnation to which the carnal mind is doomed. He that hath "sown to the Spirit," will then "reap life everlasting." The holy will exult in the approach of their Judge—the wicked, trembling with horror, will "call upon the rocks and the mountains to fall upon them." Yes, the true believer will rejoice that "his redemption"—from sin—"is drawing nigh." Weak as may have been the principle of holiness within him, he is sure that when his Savior comes, it will be both increased and perpetuated. All will then be purity. No clouds will come betwixt him and his adorable Redeemer. What child of God can look at the happiness and purity of heaven, and not long to experience them? What but sin embitters his life, and makes his pilgrimage a weary way? Should he not then rejoice when this hateful and polluting thing shall be gone forever? Not only will he be "holy still;"

but his holiness shall be augmenting in measure through the ceaseless ages of eternity. But whilst the good man has reason to rejoice, the wicked may well be dismayed. O, what is his prospect?—Filthy, and still more filthy, through eternity. His eternity must be not only wretched, but increasingly wretched. He will go on sinning and suffering forever. In hell there will be no change but from bad to worse, and from suffering to still deeper anguish.

Prayer.

Thanks be unto thy name, O God, that thou hast provided a heaven for the righteous. Not only hast thou prepared glorious mansions for their repose and happiness; but thou wilt make their souls meet to take possession of them. Thy Holy Spirit dwells in thy people, to purify them; nor will he leave his work incomplete; but will carry it on to perfection. Grant, O most merciful Father, that we may possess those principles and feelings which shall fit us to enjoy "the rest which remaineth." May we be habitually in readiness for the coming of the Son of Man. Since that event will only make the holy *more* holy, and the sinful more corrupt and hopeless; grant that we may be daily rising in purity, and becoming more and more assimilated to the likeness of God. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, may we also appear with him in glory." Let not the world, nor any thing that appertains to it, so engage our hearts or hands, as to make us reluctant to rise and follow our Lord, whenever his voice shall call us hence. O, may we be so weaned from earth—so enraptured with the prospect of heaven—so burdened with a sense of the sin that remaineth—so desirous of perfect holiness, that we may desire and even long "to depart and be with Christ."

MEDITATION XXV.

LIKENESS TO JESUS.

But we have the mind of Christ. 1 *Cor.* 2: 16.

This was affirming a great deal. And yet when we consider who said it, and on what grounds, we cannot consider it as pharisaical or presumptuous. Lived there ever a mortal who, in character and conduct, approached nearer the Lord Jesus Christ than the apostle Paul? Though the last, he was the chiefest of the apostles. His humility—his zeal—his self-sacrificing spirit—his untiring labors—his unceasing prayers—his purity, all show, that "he had been with Jesus and learned of him." O that we could follow this apostle as he followed Christ! Why is it that we cannot say in the same confident tone, "we have the mind of Christ?" Is it because, in these days, there has been a falling off from that primitive purity and self-denial which characterized the first disciples? Let each believer inquire in what respects he differs from the great exemplar? Let him ask himself the question, "Do I possess the mind of Christ? Do I breathe his spirit; do I bear his image? Do I prosecute the same unwearied exertions for the good of souls? The mind of Christ, recollect, was all benevolence. It was for the salvation of men that he lived and died. Whilst "about his Father's business," he was above the tempting influence of worldly honors and pleasures. Under sufferings, he was all patience and submission. In the prosecution of his great work, he neither feared the frowns nor coveted the praises of men. Much of his time was spent in solitude and prayer. His Father's

glory was his great aim. He loved his enemies, and prayed even for his murderers. He was the friend and instructor of the poor, and the comforter of the distressed. Such was the mind of Christ. Hast thou, O my soul, the same spirit? Alas; how few of us can say, that *we* have the mind of Christ? Then let us, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Prayer.

How far short, O Lord, do we fall of that perfect pattern which thou hast exhibited for our imitation! Sin is still so prevalent, and the power of temptation so strong, that we seem to bear much of "the image of the earthy;" and but little of "the image of the heavenly." But blessed be thy name, that thou hast given us some longing desires to throw off the "old man which is corrupt" and to be delivered entirely from the bondage of sin. Thou hast opened our eyes to see the loveliness of thy character. The contemplation shames us, yet attracts us. Never can we be satisfied with any thing less than entire conformity to thy blessed image. Enable us then to struggle until the old nature is completely subdued, and the new man, "which is after God," reigns without a rival. Grant us the Holy Spirit to dwell in us; that every faculty and affection may be brought into captivity to thy will. Form thyself "within us the hope of glory." Bind our souls to thee in all the intimacy of a daily fellowship. O let us walk with thee our God and Savior. Thus by a vital union—a close and habitual converse with thee, may we lose more and more the image of the earthy, and acquire more and more that of the heavenly, until we shall become complete in thee, and arrive at "the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus."

MEDITATION XXVI.

THE RESTLESS SOUL.

But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark; for the waters were on the face of the whole earth. *Gen.* 8: 9.

This passage has been beautifully applied to the condition of a saint wandering over earth in search of rest, and returning at length to his Savior disappointed, and glad to be received again into his bosom, where alone there is peace. How true is it, that to one, whose affections have been directed to things above, earthly pleasures seem to have lost their wonted relish. No prospect however beautiful—no pleasures however refined can be enjoyed, without the associated presence and beneficence of God. When God is recognized in them, and the heart is properly affected towards him, then do even earthly scenes acquire an additional interest. But let the Christian lose sight for a season of his heavenly inheritance, and wander over earth's surface in search of sublunary good, how soon will he find an unsatisfying vacuity, where not even an olive leaf shall be found to greet his eye or to cheer his heart. If the wicked, who have never tasted any higher than earthly gratifications, are unable to find here below the good which they crave and which they anticipate—if at every step *they* are disappointed; surely he, who has been accustomed to drink at the pure fountain of spiritual joy, can never find rest to the soul. The Christian may so far backslide, as to wish to explore anew the world which he professes to have forsaken. And God may suffer him to do so. But O how soon his wing will tire, and his pros-

pect become gloomy! Glad will he be to return and flutter about the ark, longing to be taken in, where he can once more feel himself happy and at home. And Jesus does kindly extend his hand, even when we have sinfully wandered from his arms. Why is it that we can be so often deceived? Have we not tried the world—and have we not been disappointed in the pursuit? Never again then let us leave the sacred ark — never again wander from our Lord.

Prayer.

Ever blessed God, thou hast taught us to find our supreme felicity in thee. Thankful would we be for this; for thou art an all-sufficient portion, and when we can call thee ours, and the light of thy countenance is lifted up upon us, our happiness is perfect; nor can it be shaken by any of the vicissitudes of earth. But O how prone are we to wander from thee—to forsake "the fountain of living waters!" But away from thee, how can we be happy? How soon does sadness invade our hearts and sorrow sit upon our eye-lids! The creature cannot make us blessed. We have tried the creature and found all on earth to be but vanity. Wander where we will—from place to place, from pleasure to pleasure—all is unsatisfying, if thou O God art absent. We are like the dove, when out of the ark, which saw itself surrounded by one wide waste of waters. How glad was she to get within her sacred retreat! So, O Savior, would we gladly flee into thy arms. We will search no longer for happiness here below. Henceforward let us repose on thy bosom. Let us feel a holy indifference to the attractions of this deceitful world. May it be our privilege to be taken at last into that secure retreat—that glorious haven where no storms can come and no temptations allure our souls away from thee. Amen.

MEDITATION XXVII.

THE VESTMENT.

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. *Rom.* 13: 14.

By a figure of speech, the believer is exhorted to clothe himself with the imitable attributes of the Savior. Jesus our Lord was adorned with meekness. His followers should therefore cultivate the same spirit. The robe that Jesus wore was immaculate. His spirit was pure. He was, in this respect, "separate from sinners." All therefore who have "named his name" should be careful to "depart from iniquity." They should "purify themselves even as Christ is pure." Jesus was self-denying. He shrunk from no labors or sufferings when the good of others was concerned. He toiled unceasingly and suffered submissively. This is the spirit which we are bound to imitate. Instead of courting ease and flinching from suffering in the cause of God; we should tread in the very footsteps of our Master. Like the apostle, we should glory in sufferings, endured for Christ's sake. With Jesus was the spirit of prayer. Whole nights were spent in agonizing supplication for our lost race. Believer—hast thou ever yet tested the possible results of such a spirit of prayer? O, for the sweet, holy temper of Christ our Lord to be breathed into us! But the flesh clamors. It pleads for indulgence. It provokes an appetite for sensual pleasure. Influenced by it, we strive for worldly grandeur, or for transitory joys; and immediately, peace, nay hope itself departs. Some provision for the flesh, we know must be made. But what

does the flesh need? Not *pampering;* no, merely *sustaining.* Simple should be our fare; and then our work for Christ will be proportionably easy and delightful. The danger is that we "make *provision* for the flesh to fulfil the *lusts* thereof;" and then comes sin, darkness and ruin.

Prayer.

O, for the full impress of our Savior's image! We would be clothed, O Lord, in thy spirit. Infuse into our souls those heavenly traits which shone so perfectly in thy character. Grant to us thy meekness, thy humility, thy zeal and thy purity. How deplorably deficient are we in all these graces! Our spirits are haughty, often over-bearing. We cannot brook an injury, nor are we quick enough to forgive it. Our zeal in thy service may be called coldness. O give us thy meekness. Rekindle our zeal by a living coal from off thy altar. Our hearts are defiled. A thousand polluting images have passed through them; and they are "desperately wicked." But, O Savior, thou didst shed thy blood to purify us; and we humbly entreat thee to wash and sanctify us, that we may be made to resemble in some humble measure, the master whom we profess to follow. We would be like thee in all things. We would fain imbibe the sweet spirit of self-denial and benevolence, which carried thee through so many labors and sufferings for the salvation of souls. Help us also to deny ourselves for the good of others. Especially may we deny the "lusts of the flesh." Let us not seek ease, nor any form of self-indulgence. Make us "good soldiers of the cross of Christ." May we delight to bear that cross even though fainting under the load; and having suffered with thee here, O, may we reign with thee forever. Amen.

MEDITATION XXVIII.

JESUS LOVED.

Whom not having seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. 1 *Peter* 1: 8.

Love to Christ differs from love to a mere creature in the circumstance, that, in the one case, the emotion is excited by the sensible presence of the individual; but in the other, there may exist a strong and ardent love, though the object of it has never been revealed to the eye of sense. Every true believer can say "to *me*, Christ is unspeakably precious." The attachment is founded on a perception of the moral beauties of his Savior. He has never *seen* him. It was the privilege of but a few to follow his footsteps—to sit at his feet—and to look on his benevolent countenance. But blessed be God, we have transmitted to us, a faithful record of his character, his works, his doctrine, and his sufferings. By the eye of faith we discern him seated at the right hand of the Father. We inquire not how he looked; but who he was, and why he came into the world. When we learn that he is "God manifest in the flesh"—when we read that he came into the world "to seek and to save that which was lost"—when we consider his benevolence, his humility, his meekness; in short, when we see in him "the fulness of the Godhead," we are melted and subdued by love divine. When we can call him *our* Savior —when we can say, "Jesus is *mine* and I am *his*"—when with a penitent heart we can look on Calvary—and from Calvary, glance to the glories of the Lamb enthroned, how *can* we but love and adore our divine Redeemer? It

is *faith* that begets and sustains this love. When faith is strong, love will be proportionably ardent. We shall rejoice in Christ, "with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory." But soon will faith cease, and—glorious thought—we shall then "see him as he is." O, how transporting! Nothing shall ever again intervene between us and the Savior whom we love. It will be one unclouded vision forever.

Prayer.

Why is it, O exalted Redeemer, that we do not love thee more? In thy character there is every thing attractive. Our judgment decideth, thou art all divine. But alas, these hearts seem benumbed. They will not *feel*, where they ought to be transported. How easily are we interested and excited by objects of sense! But even when we look upon thee—though so glorious to behold, though in thee dwelleth such unearthly beauty—sin will often seem to fetter our affections. Still do we mourn over this deficiency; and we trust thou dost enable us, at times, to say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that we love thee." Our prayer is that thou wouldst reveal thyself to our faith. May the Holy Spirit "receive of thine and show it unto us," that our love may kindle into a glowing flame. We would fain feel it, warming every fibre of our hearts, and rousing us to live and to labor for thee alone. Let thy love constrain us. May it be the moving principle in all we do and say. Clear our obstructed vision. A thousand vanities, O Lord, have intervened between thee and our love. Remove them, we beseech thee, and let us gaze upon thine image, until we are transformed into it; and, at last, permit us to see thy face without a veil, and to worship at thy feet, forever. Amen.

MEDITATION XXIX.

INFIDELITY REBUKED.

Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. *Ps.* 8: 2.

The displays of divine grace are made often upon subjects whose transformation is striking and wonderful. The ignorant as well as the degraded are visited with mercy. Even children—and sometimes *little* children—whose buoyant spirits and thoughtless hearts would seem almost to incapacitate them for reflection on the great subjects of religion —are sometimes found drawn, as by an invisible hand, to the fountain of eternal truth. As their infant minds drink in the waters of life, their lips become vocal with the praises of the Redeemer. This is done in such a manner as to confound the sceptic, and to illustrate the grace and power of God. To an infidel mind, there is no argument so irresistible as the example of one of vicious habits or circumscribed knowledge effectually enlightened and purified through the blessed gospel. The enemy and the avenger is stilled by such an exhibition. He is obliged to say "this is indeed the finger of God." One practical inference from all this should be, *that to overthrow infidelity, our best plan will be, to multiply living examples of the transforming power of truth.* O that we might feel the force of this inference! Argument has been tried again and again against the ramparts of infidelity and of heresy; but they have been in a measure proof against the assault. Let Christians then arise, in the power of faith and prayer, with zeal for the Lord of hosts, and strive for the out-pouring of

the Spirit and the conversion of souls. *To the young*, especially, let them direct their efforts; that praises to the Redeemer may dwell on the lips of even babes and sucklings.

Prayer.

O Lord, thou hast inscribed thy glory on the visible heavens. But the greatest exhibition of it which thou hast made, is in the transformation of the human heart. O what a wondrous change does thy grace effect! Even babes and sucklings are sometimes the subjects of it. Carry forward the triumphs of that grace. Subdue millions more, until all shall know thee from the greatest even to the least. O Lord, how bold and blasphemous are thine enemies! They deny the truth and vital power of thy gospel; yea, they ridicule and despise it. Wilt thou not arise and vindicate thy cause? Refute and confound and *still* these enemies, by exhibiting the work of the Spirit upon hearts so young, so ignorant, or so degraded, that men will be compelled to confess thy hand. And whilst thy grace is enlightening others, O let its influence be felt upon us. We are still but babes in Christ. Strengthen us then, O Lord, and increase our knowledge of divine things. Let us feed upon the "sincere milk of the word," and thereby "grow in grace" continually. From being "babes" let us become "full-grown men in Christ Jesus." And, O Lord, when thou hast fulfilled thy good pleasure with us here on earth, receive us to thy courts above, where we shall "put away childish things," "see as we are seen and know as we are known." For Jesus' sake. Amen.

MEDITATION XXX.

THE PATIENCE OF HOPE.

It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. *Lam.* 3: 26.

Hope implies the existence of something which we wish removed, or the absence of something which is strongly desired. In either case, the mind becomes agitated and restless. If afflictions press upon the soul or the body, we are liable to be fretful or impatient. We would have them, at once, removed. We are not apt to inquire into the cause of them; nor whether the will of God in laying them upon us has been fulfilled. Averse to suffering in any shape, we naturally long to be free from it. Under the yoke, impatience sometimes grows into murmuring and rebellion. Let us be careful to guard against such a spirit, lest its indulgence should provoke God to perpetuate our sufferings. Let us behave as a "weaned child" under our afflictions. Let us submit to them as a wholesome chastisement; and be more anxious to derive benefit from them, than to have them removed. We should remember, that God's time for their removal is the best time; it therefore becomes us "quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord." So also, when strongly desiring things which we do not possess, but which may be needful or indispensable; let us beware of a covetous or impatient spirit. With pious resignation, let us leave the event with God. Hope is the anchor of our souls. But even when clinging to it, may we not forget, that our expectations, as it respects earthly things, may never be realized, or may be realized at a period and in circumstances altogether unexpected. But as to spiritual good,

our hope, if we are Christians, must end in glorious fruition. The darkest night must be succeeded by the morning; and the heaviest trials of the believer will issue in the "salvation of the Lord."

Prayer.

O God, to know thy will, to obey it, to submit to it, is the duty and the happiness of man. But how often do we utter the expression, "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," without feeling the full force of the sentiment! Alas, our deceitful hearts lead us astray; and hence we often find our lips uttering what our conduct denies. It has pleased thee, O Lord, to place us in a state of trial and discipline. Tribulation we must have in this world. Thou dost lead us, at times, into a dark path, and place upon our necks a heavy yoke. But, kind Father in heaven, thy design in all this is most paternal and gracious; it is to try us as gold in the furnace, and to prepare us for thy glorious rest. Let us never murmur at thy dealings. There has no affliction happened unto us that is not peculiar to thy people; and thou canst with the temptation, O Lord, "make a way for our escape." Suffer us not to deny or even doubt thy faithfulness, though clouds and darkness surround thy dispensations. Still trusting in thee, may we patiently wait for the removal of the affliction. Bow our spirits in sweet submission to thy will. Enable us to say from the heart, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth to him good;" and to exclaim, with the once suffering patriarch, "though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

MEDITATION XXXI.

SPIRIT OF LOVE.

Let all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. *Eph.* 4: 31, 32.

We have here a rule for the reciprocal intercourse of believers. It bears upon it the pure stamp of heaven. It is melancholy indeed, that Christians should need such cautions and counsels as the above. But alas, who that knows his own heart, is not sensible how necessary as well as pertinent they are! The remaining corruption—still lingering in the heart of the most sanctified believer—exposes him to temptation. When we are injured, or when we imagine ourselves to be so, how prone are we to resent it! The first impulses generally are sinful. We can even use harsh and bitter terms in application to the conduct or motives of our professing brethren. To be liable to such sallies of passion is a great evil. They rob our own bosoms of peace—injure the cause of Christ—and give occasion to the wicked to triumph. O, for more of that sweet forgiving spirit, which dwelt in the bosom of our Lord! Consider the argument of the apostle; "even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Exercise towards thy real or supposed enemy the spirit of forgiveness which God hath manifested towards thee. Surely, towards thy brethren—those who are co-heirs with thee of the heavenly inheritance—thou shouldst entertain no feelings but those of the most generous attachment. If thou hast aught against a brother, go to him alone, and let the breach be healed by mutual explanation and forgiveness. Emblazon not the

faults of any member of Christ's body. Carry about with thee the mantle of charity. Open not thy mouth to calumniate, nor thine ear to receive the calumny of others. Away with the spirit of detraction. When tempted to think evil or to speak evil of others, remember how thou thyself wouldst appear, were God to treat thee as severely as thou art disposed to treat others. Cultivate a meek, forbearing spirit under injuries; remembering that, "love worketh no ill to his neighbor."

Prayer.

O God, there is nothing for which our hearts more frequently condemn us than selfishness and unkindness. We are prone to prefer our own ease and reputation to the happiness and comfort of others. Too often have we been guilty of wrong feelings and censorious remarks towards those whom we ought to have loved as brethren. But "if our heart condemn us, thou O God, art greater than our heart and knowest all things." For every such offence we would repent in dust and in ashes. Forgive us, O God, and dispose all whom we have ever injured to forgive us also. Enable us henceforth to exercise no emotions towards our fellow men, and especially towards our christian brethren, but those of love and kindness. May no bitter or censorious remark ever fall from our lips. O give us the sweet forgiving spirit of the Savior. May we so study our own faults—see so deeply into our own depravity, that we shall be ready to esteem every other Christian better than ourselves; and ourselves as less than the least of all thy creatures. Give us the meek and lowly heart. Impart to us that "charity which is the bond of perfectness; which suffereth long and is kind; which thinketh no evil; which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things." O may this never failing grace be in us and abound. May we be able, at all times, sincerely to pray, "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Lead us not into the temptation of evil speaking; but deliver us from so great an offence, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

MEDITATION XXXII.

THE FURNACE OF AFFLICTION.

But he knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. *Job* 23: 10.

It is a consolation to the suffering Christian to reflect, that every affliction is designed for his purification. The patriarch Job, under the heavy pressure of sorrow, sought his God. But alas, God seemed to hide himself. He "went forward, but he was not there; and backward, but he could not perceive him; on the left hand where he doth work, but he could not behold him; on the right hand, but still he could not see him." It would seem then that the sufferer must have sunk down in despair. But no; he declares that although *he* could not see God, God could see *him*. His father on high knew the way in which he was leading him; and would at last—after sufficient trial had been made of his confidence — bring him forth as gold. Here is strong faith under the most untoward circumstances. O let us imitate it, trusting in God, even when we cannot see the way in which he is leading us. It may indeed be a dark and disagreeable course. The flesh may shrink and the spirits droop; but know we not that God our father is our guide? He sees perfectly the way in which we are led. His kind hand has marked it out. It is therefore the *best* way. When our spirits are sufficiently humbled—our confidence tested—and our hope tried; he will bring us forth from the furnace as gold. We shall shine with a purer lustre after our passage through the fire. We shall be more fit to gem the diadem of our Savior—more

fit to swell the song of eternal praise for his redeeming mercy.

Prayer.

Our way, O Lord, is in the dark. We see not wherefore it is thou contendest with us. We are tempted to exclaim, "God hath forgotten us and our Lord hath forsaken us." But we will not indulge these distrustful thoughts. We acknowledge that our sins are sufficiently numerous and aggravated to call for the heaviest chastisements at thy hand. Shouldst thou even cast us off forever, our consciences must approve the rectitude of thy decision. But O, let us not perish, when there is an infinite provision for our salvation. No other plea than the Savior's precious blood would we offer. For his sake remove thy stroke, and "return and visit us early with thy mercy." It has pleased thee "to bring us into darkness and not into light." O God, we are humbled under thy chastisements. We bow beneath thy rod. For our sins and our unfaithfulness we deserve to feel it. May we be enabled to submit to the punishment of our sins—to behave ourselves as becometh offending but penitent children. May we be consoled, by the consideration that our afflictions are for our own good—that they are designed to purify us and to prepare us for heaven. Why should we pray for prosperity; why deprecate affliction; when prosperity has proved so injurious, and affliction so salutary to our souls? Still, O God, would we pray, that when, by these trials, thou hast fitted us to glorify thee, thou wouldst remove the stroke and bring us forth as gold to serve thee on earth, and to praise thee through eternity; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

MEDITATION XXXIII.

TRUE RICHES.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. *Matt.* 6: 19, 20, 21.

Some will be ready to apply this language to the disciples only. They will say; surely it cannot apply to us. We must toil and hoard for the sake of our children and dependents. Not to do so, would be tempting Providence. It will be well for those who thus speak, to take heed, lest this prudent forethought be not, after all, a cloak for avarice. To such persons, let me say, the language *does* apply to *us;* if not literally, yet surely in the spirit of the sentiment. There is at the present day too much hoarding among Christians. There is, in respect to a worldly competence, too much distrust of Providence. Let a habit of hoarding get possession of a man, and almost inevitably he will become a groveling worldling! Whilst heaping up treasures here, he must employ most of his thoughts upon them, and upon the means of obtaining and securing them. Thus, "where his treasure is, there will his heart be also." But a Christian's heart is professedly fixed in heaven. He is to "set his affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Should *he* then be anxious to accumulate another and an opposite kind of treasure here below, when the process and the influence are so detrimental to the soul? Can he serve God and mammon? Does he reply; that unless he accumulated a fortune, either himself or his children may come

to want? O, unbelieving, faithless disciple! Go, give a portion of thy wealth to the Savior's kingdom, and be sure, from God's own promise, that thy wants shall be supplied, and that thy "seed shall never beg their bread." O, labor not thus earnestly for the "meat that perisheth." It may prove a curse to thy soul, and the ruin of thy children. "Take heed and beware of covetousness." "Seek first the kingdom of God; and all other (necessary) things shall be added unto you."

Prayer.

Thou hast declared, O Lord, that "where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also." Search then these hearts of ours. Behold and see if the love of the world is lurking here; for thou hast said again; "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Well may we tremble at this fearful declaration; for if this secret love of the world be not in us, why are we so pleased with its riches? Why are we so joyous when it bestows its honors—or so sad when deprived of them? Do not these feelings tell us alas, that we still love the world? O that we might be enabled to bring forth the accursed thing, and repent of our idolatry! Surrounded by objects of sense—allured by pleasure—impelled by a thousand unworthy motives to make gold our confidence, how powerful is the temptation to lay up our treasure on earth, and to forget our inheritance above! But such a course must end in disappointment. It must "pierce us through with many sorrows." From these temptations, and from this worldly spirit, O Lord, deliver us. Enable us to keep in view that better inheritance which is laid up for us in heaven. May we tread the world beneath our feet. Without a sigh, may we see its pleasures and its honors pass into other hands; and may we rejoice that God has reserved some better thing for us. By growing in grace, may we daily add to our treasure in heaven; and may we so use the "mammon of unrighteousness," as that, at last, "we may be received into everlasting habitations."

MEDITATION XXXIV.

UNSEEN GLORIES.

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 1 *Cor.* 2: 9.

The glories of the gospel lie concealed from all but those who have been taught of the Spirit. To the eye of the sensual or worldly man, Christ has no beauty;—his doctrines no interest; his invitations no attractiveness. To *his* ear there is no melody, even in the harps of heaven. In his heart there is no feeling, though his attention be directed to his guilt as a sinner, and to the agonies of Calvary which were endured to expiate it. But O how differently does the Christian view these subjects? To *him*, Christ is "the chiefest among ten thousand." His doctrines are the daily food of the soul. His promises are full of sweet consolation and encouragement. The very name of Jesus sounds sweet in his ear. His heart dilates as he contemplates the glories of the upper world. He is filled with gratitude, at the thought, that they are purchased at so great an expense for so unworthy a sinner. Faint however are his most enlarged conceptions. Ere he can fully appreciate these glories, the fleshy veil must be withdrawn. He must have new and glorious perceptions. Every sense must be refined—every affection purified, to enable him to estimate his bright reward. It has not entered into his heart, how great will be the bliss and the brightness of heaven. O, let us then "cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light." Let us anticipate a portion of our heaven

upon earth; and pluck an occasional leaf from the tree of life, before we are admitted to a seat under its immortal foliage.

Prayer.

Why, O God, when heaven is so glorious, should earth hold an attractive power over us? Why should we pause to amuse ourselves with trifles, when the crown of glory is offered, and the mansions of rest are almost in sight? Come, O divine Spirit, and breathe new energy into our sluggish souls. Come and spread thy benign wings over us; or rather bear us on them, towards the blissful regions where our Savior dwells. We are sick at heart of earth's pleasures. There is naught in them to satisfy us. The most attractive scenes of earth have now less influence, since, by faith, we have caught a glimpse of that bliss which is permanent and soul-satisfying. O for still brighter visions of faith! We would fain see more of those invisible things which neutralize the glare of this vain world. Give us, O Lord, a glimpse of thy merciful and benignant countenance. May we see, with spiritual vision, the glories of the Lamb. Or should it please thee to keep us lowly, by withholding these ecstatic views; O, at last, when there will be no more place for pride, assign to us some humble seat in thy blissful kingdom, where we may gaze on thy glories, and unite in praising thy name forever, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MEDITATION XXXV.

EXTENT OF MERCY.

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. 1 *Tim.* 1: 15.

What believer does not value this precious text; "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners?" Salvation was the glorious errand on which the Prince of life came into this dark and polluted world. But the salvation of whom? Not of those who were his friends; for "he came unto his own"—unto those who ought to have been his friends—"and his own received him not." O, we were all his enemies, and yet behold, he dies for us! Having thus made forgiveness possible, he transforms us from enemies into friends. We are reconciled to God through his blood. We are saved from the curse of the law—from the pollution of sin—from the deceitfulness of the world—from the malice of Satan—from the fear of death—and from the damnation of hell. We are saved to enjoy the favor of God—the protection and guidance of his providence—the privilege of adoption—and the inheritance which is incorruptible. Who can sufficiently appreciate this great salvation? Eternity alone will suffice to celebrate the praises of Jesus, its great "author and finisher." This salvation is for the chief of sinners. Such, in his own estimation, was Paul; and such doubtless every sincere believer regards himself. Each one knows more of himself than any other —save the omniscient one—*can* know of him; and more than he can know of any other Christian; and hence he

must consider himself the chief of sinners. How should we then be clothed with humility ! O, were it not that Jesus can save the chief of sinners, who could hope for the divine mercy ? As the salvation *is* so great, who, if penitent, need despair ?

Prayer.

"Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!" Hadst thou, O God, withheld thy Son from us, when nothing but his intervention could have saved us, how universal and overwhelming would have been our destruction ! Even now, after Jesus has died, do we deserve to be cast off forever for rejecting him. Yet such are thy patience and forbearance, that throughout the period of our unbelief we were not consumed ; nay, we indulge the hope, that thy boundless mercy has forgiven us even this aggravated sin. It is to the atoning blood that we are indebted for all. O, for a thousand tongues, to speak of thy love and compassion, blessed Jesus ! In sincerity we declare ourselves the chief of sinners. In this declaration thou knowest there is no affectation. Truly our sins are of the crimson dye. Despair would forever take possession of us, hadst thou not declared that " thy blood can cleanse from all sin." We fly to thy feet, O Lamb of God. We come to weep as did the penitent Mary. Dissolve these adamantine hearts. Let them bleed and break at the recollection of our abominable deeds. Cast upon us, O Savior, one renewed look of mercy. Enable us by faith to touch the hem of thy garment—to lay hold anew on thy salvation—to surrender ourselves and all we have into thy faithful hands. Amen.

MEDITATION XXXVI.

KEEPING THE HEART.

Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. *Prov.* 4: 23.

The streams do not more certainly indicate the nature of the fountain whence they flow, than do the actions of men the true state of their hearts. For a while hypocrisy may succeed in its disguises; but sooner or later all men discover themselves. Avarice will be seen greedy in the pursuit of gain. Ambition, leaping forward at a bound, or lurking for some favorable opening to mount the steep of fame, will show its selfish and restless spirit. Sensuality will look out at the eye, or reveal itself in a career of criminal indulgence. But where divine grace has cast in its salt at the fountain head, we discover a corresponding and growing purity in the conduct. Humility begins to displace pride. Contentment comes in the place of avarice and ambition. Temperance succeed to self-indulgence. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good." We must therefore keep a vigilant eye upon the heart, which is the fountain. If there we discover the incipient evil, it must be cured before it breaks out into the overt act. By close observation, we shall discover within us, the risings of almost every evil propensity, which ever disgraced the conduct of man. Envy, revenge, infidelity, sensuality, ambition, avarice, yea, selfishness in a thousand forms will meet the eye. But if these passions show themselves—even in the germ—we should fly at once to the throne of grace, and beg not only for their suppres-

sion but their extirpation. "Create in us a clean heart," should be our cry. Penitently should we mourn over inbred sin; and faithfully should we contend against it, until we conquer by the blood of the Lamb.

Prayer.

O Lord, sensible that our hearts are "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," we come to thee with the prayer of thy servant David, "Create in us a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within us. Wash us thoroughly from our iniquity, and cleanse us from our sin." Purify our *hearts,* and then shall we be secure from the danger of "presumptuous sins." Not a day passeth, but these depraved hearts are exhibiting the entire passions and feelings which thy law condemns and which shock us by their turpitude. O Lord, we mourn over the remaining indications of the old, corrupt, and deceitful man. "Who shall deliver us"—we are ready to exclaim—"from the body of this death?" May we be able in faith to add, "we thank God," we shall be delivered, "through our Lord Jesus Christ." Yes, his grace can reach the disorder. Though it lie deep within, *his* blood can wash it out. O then sprinkle our guilty hearts with that atoning blood. Enable us also to keep a strict watch over the inner man. May we hate the incipient thought of evil. Never may we indulge, even for an instant, a depraved passion. May we abhor it as soon as it appears. May we in every time of temptation, obtain thy grace to help us; and may we at all times, so keep the heart, that our conduct shall be a living testimony to the purifying influence of the gospel. Amen.

MEDITATION XXXVII.

DIVINE ILLUMINATION.

Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. *Ps.* 119: 18.

Such should be the prayer of every one who peruses the oracles of God. They are not to be understood, nor can their beauty or force be appreciated, by a cursory or careless reading. There are in them hidden mysteries which it is the prerogative of the Holy Spirit alone to reveal. He who inspired men to write them, who alone knows the mind and will of God, *he* must enlighten our understandings, or the Bible will be to us a sealed book. Who has not felt the weakness and ignorance of his own mind when poring over the deep truths of revelation? It is indeed "a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path;" but the Holy Spirit must show us our darkness, and enable us to see and follow the heavenly illumination. Why is it that we so seldom truly relish the divine testimonies? Why do we so often peruse the word with coldness and indifference? Do we not rely too much on our own sagacity; or read it in a prayerless frame of mind? O that we could feel towards it that holy reverence which its truth and importance demand! O that we could always study it with a feeling of child-like docility. Wondrous things are in God's law, which we have not yet discovered—mines of spiritual wealth which we have never yet seen—and divine beauties which yet lie concealed from our view. The glory of God shines in every page; the wondrous schemes of providence and redemption are there unfolded. Let us, then, in read-

ing or studying this blessed volume, ever pray, with David, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

Prayer.

Ignorant and blind, weak and depraved, we come to thee, O God, for knowledge and light, strength and purification. Thy word is as "the refiner's fire." By the application of it through the Holy Spirit, it purifieth the soul that truly understandeth it. O, then, "sanctify us through thy truth, thy word is truth." Enable us to read the sacred oracles with a spirit of docility and meekness, sensible how dark by nature is our understanding; and O may the Divine Spirit be ever present to impart his heavenly illumination. Too carelessly have we read the sacred record, which testifieth of Jesus. Our hearts have been cold and our minds wandering. We have neither relished nor understood, as we ought, these lively oracles. O forgive this practical irreverence, and take away this hardness of heart. Give us a strong desire to know thee, and to understand thy will. May "thy statutes be our songs in the house of our pilgrimage." Enlighten us into the mysteries of thy word. Let us understand its concealed glories; for, O Lord, thou hast "hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Be ours the privilege to sit as children at thy feet, and learn with meekness what the sons of pride scorn to listen to. "Open thou our eyes, that we may behold wondrous things out of thy law;" for Jesus' sake. Amen.

MEDITATION XXXVIII.

CHRISTIAN ENERGY.

Arise, therefore, and be doing, and the Lord be with thee. 1 *Chron.* 22: 16.

What David said to his son Solomon, God says to every believer. The temple was to be built. The materials were ready. The workmen were at hand; and Solomon was charged to set about the enterprise without delay. "The Lord be with thee," says David. Without the divine blessing and cooperation, the king well knew, the work could neither rightly proceed, nor come to a happy completion. And what a magnificent edifice was reared for the worship of Jehovah! There was nothing like it before, nor will there ever be after. Its greatest attraction however was, that the presence of Jehovah was revealed in its holy courts. There is a temple *now* to be erected. It is to be built of "living stones." It is commenced on earth, to be completed in heaven, where its top-stone is to be laid amid the praises of the holy universe. The work is begun; but long, long will it be ere it is completed, unless more hands are employed and more hearts are interested in its advancement. The materials are ready. Nothing is wanting but faith and christian energy. "Arise therefore," O people of the living God, "and be doing." The responsibility of this work rests on *you*. It is a weighty responsibility. It cannot be met, unless you rise and consecrate your entire energies to the work. And if you do, "God will be with you." He has promised this. He has also declared that the world shall be filled with the glory of this spiritual building.

When it is completed—for completed it must be—O may it be said that *we* had some humble part in its erection! May we henceforth cast off our supineness, and endeavor to lay at least one polished stone in this glorious structure.

Prayer.

"Glorious things hast thou spoken," O God, "of Zion," thy holy city. Thou hast declared, that "her walls shall be salvation, and her gates praise." Thine ancient temple thou didst condescend to grace with thy presence. Thou didst fill its courts with thy glory. But the spiritual temple which thou hast designed, and in part erected, is far more precious in thy sight. Hast thou not promised that it shall be one day completed? O then let thy people, whom thou hast honored as co-workers with thee, arise, and with one heart and one mind, engage in the work. Move them, O God, by thy Holy Spirit. Let the rich bring of their abundance, and the poor their pittance. Let young and old, yea all, engage in the glorious enterprise. The world is still "dead in trespasses and in sins." Hundreds of millions are yet to be enlightened. O, when shall we feel the pressure of the responsibility which lies upon us? By all that Jesus has done for us—by all that he has done to save a ruined world—may we be constrained "to come up to the help of the Lord, against the mighty." Wilt thou bless thy people in all their efforts to build the spiritual temple. O impart strength, self-denial, zeal, courage, perseverance. Without thine omnipotent arm to aid us, we fail. But *with* it, we are sure to succeed; and when the work is completed, to thy name shall be all the glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MEDITATION XXXIX.

WATCHFULNESS.

Therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober. 1 *Thess.* 5: 6.

The apostle calls believers "children of the light." The unbelieving are children of darkness. They see not their guilt and danger. They understand not the glories of the gospel. On these subjects they are in darkness; and "they love darkness rather than light." Therefore when death comes they are surprised, overwhelmed, lost. But believers have come out of this night of unbelief. "The light of the glorious gospel hath shined unto them." They see the beauties of the divine word. They understand spiritual things. "The day has dawned" upon them, "and the day-star has arisen in their hearts." Therefore should *they* "not sleep" as do the wicked; but "they should watch and be sober." They should arise and "work while it is day." Up to the period of their conversion, they were asleep over the awful subjects of eternity. Now that the Spirit of God has awakened them, they should commence laboring for their Master with all possible diligence, remembering that the time is short, and that soon they will be called to their account. Let us inquire, whether we are truly awake to our responsibilities? How has the day of our spiritual life thus far been spent? Have we been "watching unto prayer?" Have we been soberly addressing ourselves to the great work of our "high calling?" Or have we been criminally slumbering at our post? Have sensual pleasures unnerved us? Has the world beguiled us? O let us rise, like Sampson, and shake

off this drowsiness, and put forth our strength in God. Our day may be a short one. But little time may be left us to serve our Lord. Soon may we be called to give in our account. Would we be found of him in peace, we must be found at our post, with our "loins girded, and our lamps trimmed and burning."

Prayer.

Thanks be unto thy name, O Lord, for having opened our eyes, and enabled us to discern thy glory. It was thy grace which broke in upon our guilty slumbers, and roused us to a sense of our danger. It was grace which poured light into our darkened understandings, and which gave us eyes to see and hearts to appreciate thy love in Christ Jesus. Now, O Lord, the scales have truly fallen from our eyes. Whilst thousands and tens of thousands around us are still in darkness; and, as it respects spiritual things, "know not their right hand from their left," thou hast graciously brought us into the light and liberty of the gospel. How ungrateful and guilty should we be, to fold our arms and again revert to a state of spiritual slumber? Alas, O God, we have too often, like the foolish virgins, thus "slumbered and slept." If now this guilty indolence has crept over us, O let the voice of thy word and Spirit arouse us, that we may trim our lamps and be ready for the bridegroom's coming. Every thing around us admonishes to vigilance. Satan, the world, our own evil hearts, wicked men, slothful professors; all are ready to draw us aside from the path of duty. Keep us, then, O Lord, "as the apple of thine eye." Let thy grace impel us forward in "the race which is set before us." May we never faint nor tire. O "may we not sleep as do others;" and when thou shalt call us hence, may we be received with the welcome of "Well done, good and faithful servants;" for Jesus' sake. Amen.

MEDITATION XL.

GREAT GAIN.

But godliness with contentment is great gain. 1 *Tim.* 6: 6.

There is a dissatisfaction with our earthly lot which is felt at times by every one. The wicked are seldom satisfied, though satiated often with earthly pleasures. Give them their heart's desire, and they will soon become restless and uneasy. They will see in the possession of others some things which excite their envy or discontent. Even the believer has often to chide his heart for its refractory feelings under the adverse dispensations of Providence. To be content with such things as God has given, when the measure of earthly good is exceedingly scanty, is an attainment of no ordinary kind. Thrice blessed Paul, thou didst learn this lesson! In whatsoever situation thou wast placed, thou wast "therewith content." O may we imitate thee in this; and endeavor, with thee, even to "take pleasure in necessities!" The apostle speaks of a connection between godliness and contentment. There *is* a close connection. True contentment must result from godliness as an effect follows the cause. Godliness implies an intelligent view of Providence as concerned in all the circumstances of our being. Godliness implies also a spirit of submission to the divine will, however expressed, whether in giving or in depriving. Godliness brings into view so much higher bliss than earth can yield, as to make the Christian regard all sublunary joy with comparative indifference. Thus godliness must promote contentment. To counteract a murmuring spirit then, let us cultivate true godliness. It

will prove to us "great gain." Yes, in a world where there is so much suffering, it will tend to smooth the rugged path, and point us to the glorious termination. Let then the dissatisfied worldling rove in search of fancied good; be it ours to cultivate true piety, the only solace in trouble, and the only safety amid the prosperities of life.

Prayer.

Why, O Lord, should we ever murmur at thy dispensations, or be dissatisfied with what thou givest? What would be our condition, were we to receive at thy hand our deserts? How would every cup of pleasure be turned into bitterness, and every source of happiness be dried up forever! But thou hast not "rewarded us according to our iniquities." Thou hast often made "our cup to run over" with blessings. But alas we have been ungrateful. By wishing for something more, we have shown our discontent. This hath been one of the innumerable sins which we have committed. In view of it, we deserve to be stripped of every earthly good. O let us then, by looking at our deserts and thy mercies, learn to adore and praise thee for the continuance of blessings which we have forfeited. Hast thou withheld from us wealth and honor? We know thou hast done it for our good. Yea, with such hearts as ours, we have reason to fear, that unless great grace were bestowed, prosperity would prove our ruin. It is good for us, O Lord, to feel our dependence—to ask of thee "our daily bread." Grant us but that "godliness" which bringeth "contentment," and it will be to us "great gain." May we be resigned to thy holy will, even when the deep billows of adversity are rolling over us. If poverty be our lot, O let us cheerfully bear it. Let us be "content with such things as we have," be they ever so few; remembering thy promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." So long as thou art our portion, may we not covet the meaner one which earthly minds are so eagerly pursuing. May God be our all, and may we at last enjoy thy blissful presence; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

MEDITATION XLI.

FAITH IN GOD.

Is any thing too hard for the Lord? *Gen.* 18: 14.

This sentence contains a severe rebuke for Sarah's unbelief. It required indeed strong confidence in Jehovah's power and faithfulness, to rely implicitly on his word, when the event predicted was contrary to the course of nature. But still it was her duty so to do. He who fixed nature's laws could supersede them. Nothing was "too hard for the Lord." His omnipotence is a guarantee for the fulfilment of all that he predicts and promises. Such, alas, is the amount of evil within us, that the very greatness of Heaven's mercy—the infinite condescension implied in it—begets a guilty unbelief. We are ready to doubt whether so great a being will thus pledge himself to convey to "worms of the dust," so great an amount of blessings. But we should not allow Satan thus to get an advantage of us. To this sceptical state of mind we should oppose the question, "is any thing too hard for the Lord?" When darkness rests upon our path, let us not conclude that all is lost. Let us inquire again; "is any thing too hard for the Lord?" When temporal afflictions press down our spirits to the dust, let us not yield to despair. When we survey the desolations which sin has made—consider what millions are sunk in idolatry—and how their rescue and regeneration, to human view, seems impossible—let us silence our doubts by asking, "is any thing too hard for the Lord?" In all circumstances of trial; in every strait to which we may be reduced, it is our consolation to remember that God is

omnipotent—that *his* hand can deliver—that his providence can provide—that his mercy can save ; when, to human view, deliverance, provision and salvation seem impossible. O, for more implicit reliance on Jehovah's power and faithfulness !

Prayer.

O most merciful Father, allow us to approach thee as the God of Abraham. Thou didst pronounce him "the father of the faithful." Thou didst enable him to trust in thee with all his heart. "He staggered not at the promise through unbelief." Relying on thy faithfulness, he cheerfully obeyed thy commands, even when thou didst require his dearest earthly blessings. Wilt thou graciously enable us to copy his example. Eradicate from our hearts the seeds of unbelief. We are prone, O Lord, to sink down under trouble, as though there was no relief even from heaven. Pardon this distrust, we beseech thee ; and enable us to stay ourselves on thee, and to hope in thy mercy. When we labor for the salvation of souls, and are tempted to believe that no blessing will follow, may we be rebuked by the question, "is any thing too hard for the Lord ?" Or if, O Lord, we are, at any time, disposed to ask, in the spirit of doubt or unbelief, how can this sin-ruined world be converted to thee ; let us be silenced and convinced by thy promises and the power of thy regenerating grace, which is able to fulfil them. O, make us "strong in faith, giving glory to God." Permit us to apply thy precious promises to our own souls. May we exercise a child-like confidence in thy truth. Although so insignificant—so guilty—yet are not these promises ours ? Are they not all "yea and amen in Christ Jesus ?" We would plead them in Jesus' name. We beseech thee to fulfil them for Jesus' sake ; that "thy kingdom may come," and "that all men may honor the Son even as they honor the Father." Amen.

MEDITATION XLII.

THE BACKSLIDER.

Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee because thou hast left thy first love. *Rev.* 2: 4.

What Christian does not look back with some degree of mournfulness, as well as with gratitude, upon the history of his early religious experience? It is true we were then influenced principally by feeling. But that feeling was deep and delightful. It was the strong emotion of love to God and man. The change which the Holy Spirit had wrought, was a great change. The Bible, once so dull, had then become the most precious of books. We roved through the promises as through a field of fragrant beauties. All nature wore an unaccustomed loveliness. God was seen and adored in every thing. Prayer was as our very breath; and praise dwelt upon our lips. The people of God were inexpressibly dear to us. The sanctuary was as the portico to heaven, and the word of God was sweeter to the taste than "honey and the honey comb." These were the scenes and emotions of our first love. They were not indeed without some passing clouds; for many a sore temptation beset us; but who can review them and not wish for a return of similar emotions! It becomes us to ask, why these feelings were not perpetuated, nay increased by the lapse of time? Have we grown cold in the service of our God? Have we lost or left our first love? If so, then has God "somewhat against us." This change cannot have taken place without guilt. God is the same glorious being as he was then. The Bible is still as precious in itself. Prayer is now equally a privilege as then. O, has not some

secret evil been in operation to cool our love—to abate our zeal—to separate us from our God? Is it the love of the world? Is it the love of the creature? Is it ambitious designs, or sensual indulgence? Search us, O God, and enable us to search ourselves. It is time to return from our wanderings. Yes, we will retrace our steps; peradventure God will again "lift up the light of his countenance upon us," and "restore unto us the joys of his salvation."

Prayer.

"O that we were as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shined upon our heads!" Those were happy days. We remember them with gratitude, but with sadness. They have alas been succeeded by days and months of darkness and of sin. O Lord, we have indeed "left our first love." How delightful were the days of our espousals! Then was prayer no burden. Our feet seemed to be winged, as we ran the Christian race. We then possessed the "heart of flesh." Inflamed with love and zeal for Christ, his "yoke was easy and his burden light." But O we have to mourn over a sad decay in our spiritual affections. A thousand temptations have pressed in upon us; and by yielding we have driven ourselves from thee and become cold in thy service. Well mightest thou cast us off, for our almost perpetual backslidings. But thou, O God, art unchangeable. "Whom thou lovest, thou lovest to the end." This is our hope. We come to thee, immutable Jehovah, and beg thee to receive thy guilty but returning children. Embrace us once more in the arms of eternal love. O, let us once more rejoice in our Father's smiles. Though wanderers we have been wretched. Our souls can find happiness in nothing but thyself. We do therefore renew our vows to be thine—yes, thine forever. Bind us to thee "by the cords of love." Fasten our affections to the cross of Jesus. Never, O never let us wander more. Amen.

MEDITATION XLIII.

PLEASING GOD.

But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. *Heb.* 11: 6.

The more we confide in God, the more do we honor him. Nothing in the conduct of the disciples met with a more frequent rebuke from the Savior, than their *unbelief.* God would have us believe what he says, and confidently expect the fulfilment of his promises. But alas, we are tempted, at times, to doubt even some of the fundamental truths of religion. These relics of scepticism are connected with our remaining depravity. In the sight of Jehovah, such thoughts are as guilty as they are offensive. We are to "believe that God is." Can a doubt enter the mind on this point? Where can we look—to what object in the entire universe—which rebukes not the sceptical thought? It is "in him that we live and move;" we should therefore, in approaching him as suppliants, regard him as nigh; as *in* us and around us. We should also remember and *believe* that "he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." How precious this promise! But we must remember the condition, "*diligently.*" It is not a cold and formal service that he will recompense. It is not a careless or infrequent application that he will approve. No: we must with agonizing earnestness seek after God. We must give "all diligence" in the work, and bring all our powers to bear upon it. We must do it in faith; assured that God will reward us with success. Then will he "lift upon us the light of his countenance." He will "give us the Holy

Spirit." He will make us "heirs of God," and "joint-heirs with Christ." He will make "crooked things straight, and rough places plain." O then, let us henceforth come to our Father with a believing heart. Let us come in the spirit of adoption. Let us throw ourselves upon his mercy, and seek, in the name of Jesus, those things which we need, and which he has promised to all his confiding children.

Prayer.

O God, "before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world; even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." Thy existence is declared in every object in nature, and confirmed in every event of providence. "Thou art over all, and through all, and in us all." Enable us to come to thee in a humble, believing frame of mind. May we believe not only that "thou art; but that thou art a rewarder of them that diligently seek thee." Encouraged by this precious promise, we come in the name of Jesus, to implore thy forgiveness and favor. Unworthy and guilty as we are, thou wilt not reject us, if we come through the merits of our great atoning high priest. But O Lord to obtain thy blessing, we must seek thee "diligently." No sluggish efforts will avail. "The effectual and fervent prayer" must be offered. O give us this spirit of prayer. Let us pour it forth, mingled with humility, penitence, and faith. May we plead with an earnestness and importunity proportionate to our necessities. Then let us have the rich reward. The reward we crave is, that we may know thee more and serve thee better—that we may be perfected in thy love—that we may be transformed into the image of Christ—that we may have grace to take up our cross daily and follow him—that we may love thy church—live to thy glory—labor for thy kingdom—that we may "live unto the Lord and die unto the Lord." These things constitute the reward for which we plead. O grant them unto us, as free, rich, unmerited mercies, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MEDITATION XLIV.

CONVERSATION.

Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ. *Phil.* 1: 27.

How persuasive and powerful would be the influence of Christians, did their conduct and conversation always comport with the gospel! Each member of the church would be a "living epistle, known and read of all men." Christ would no longer be "wounded in the house of his friends." Christians would reflect the image of their Lord. The eyes of the world would be riveted upon them; and men would be compelled to acknowledge that "they had been with Jesus," and that "they loved one another." To a vain and wicked world, this would be powerful preaching. Nothing arms the conscience of sinners with such power, as a holy example. *Theoretically* the wicked know the gospel to be pure. But how would they feel its obligations, were all its professors habitually to exemplify it! Then, the line between "those who serve God and those who serve him not," would be broad and visible. Conscience would then do her office with tenfold power. No building up in sin on the faults of professors could then be practiced. God would be glorified, and the world, we might hope, would be speedily converted. With such motives to a godly life, how is it that we have so often furnished an occasion for the enemy to blaspheme? O let us weep over our past conformity to the world. Let a broad line of distinction be seen henceforth between our conduct and that of the wicked. Let us be guided and governed by the princi-

ples of the gospel. What it approves, let us pursue. What it condemns let us avoid. Let us keep close to the counsels of our blessed Master; and let "the same mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus."

Prayer.

Blessed be thy name, O God, that thou hast given us a perfect rule of moral conduct. Thy law "is holy, and just, and good." "In keeping it there is great reward." How pure also is thy gospel! It is but a more complete development of the law, with additional motives to obedience, drawn from the tender mercy and dying love of Jesus thy Son. But O how far short do we come of fulfilling the precepts of the law or the gospel! We profess to be entirely governed by them; but alas the selfish heart suggesteth a thousand base and unworthy motives. Still do we "delight in thy law after the inward man." We would fain be governed by its precepts both in feeling and conduct. Inscribe it upon our hearts with thine own hand, that we may not depart from thee. How glorious also is thy gospel! O, our blessed Redeemer, thou hast taught us how to live. Thy own lovely example is before us. But how often hath our conduct been in contrast with thine! How unworthily of our high vocation have we walked! But now grant us thy grace that we may order our conversation according to thy gospel. Make us to let our light shine before men. We pray that we may exemplify thy gospel so strikingly, that others may be led to embrace it; that the Father may be glorified, and thy blessed cause advanced. Thus may we and every other professed follower of the cross live and act; that the world may see how transforming and glorious is thy grace—until all shall come to the knowledge of the truth, and every knee bow to thy universal sceptre. Amen.

MEDITATION XLV.

THE NATIVITY—CHRISTMAS.

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. *Matt.* 1: 21.

We have here the annunciation, not only of the Savior's birth, but of the great *end* for which he is born. What heart can contemplate this event and not be overwhelmed with a sense of the divine goodness! "Unto *us* this child is born; unto us this son is given." The angel of the Lord is sent to proclaim his advent. All heaven is moved at this interposition of the divine mercy. Christ Jesus comes in a weak and lowly form. He condescends to be "born of a woman—to be made under the law, to redeem them that are under the law, that they may receive the adoption of sons." If Jesus had not been born, there had been no hope of forgiveness. "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Without this Savior, how dark and terrifying would have been our prospects! Satan would have triumphed over the destruction of our entire race. The grave would have closed over us, until the "resurrection of damnation." Every earthly prospect would have been covered with gloom. Adore then, O my soul, the prince of life, who, for thy salvation, thus humbled himself to the form of a servant! His very *name* is precious. It is "Jesus." Is there not in this name something attractive? Speaks it not of salvation? O ye, who feel sin to be a burden—who daily groan over its polluting load—remember "*Jesus.*" *That* name ensures salvation from sin. O remember, the blood that pardons, also *purifies.* If thou art borne down under sin's oppressive weight, "look

unto Jesus." It is *his* voice which says, "thy sins are forgiven thee." But let none dare to call Jesus his Savior who consents to live in sin—who wishes to "have fellowship with the works of darkness." That faith alone is genuine which "purifieth the heart."

Prayer.

Ever blessed Lord and Savior, make us to feel our obligations for thine interposition in our behalf. Thy coming hath brought us not only pardon, but purification from the pollution of sin. Didst thou leave thy glorious throne; didst thou humble thyself to be born of a woman in order to rescue such abject worms as we are? Infinite condescension! Amazing love! We stand astonished at thine advent—thy sufferings—thy triumph. As we pore upon the scene of thy nativity, we are lost in view of the extremes of greatness and of meanness. We see God in human flesh. Thou art the babe of Bethlehem, cradled in a manger; and thou art the "mighty God, the everlasting Father." We would bow with the reverential magi, and offer thee, not the odors of eastern climes, but the poor sacrifice of our sinful hearts. O Jesus, let these hearts be broken for sin. Let them be laid a willing sacrifice at thy feet. Take us and purify us from all sin. This was the end of that salvation which thou didst bring; and this is what we need—what we most earnestly implore. O save us from the power and pollution of sin. Let it no longer "reign in our mortal body." "Create in us a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us." To thee shall be all the glory. Our song shall ever be, "unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever." Amen.

MEDITATION XLVI.

THE CAUTION.

Love not the world. 1 *John* 2: 15.

Hard requisition this to the unsanctified heart! For "the things that are in the world" are the objects of its deepest interest—of its supreme affection. The creature, in some form or other, has absorbed its desires. Now it is a thirst for gold—and now it is the promise of preferment—and anon, it is the indulgence of a mere sensual appetite. Some make a heaven of their domestic joys; and some are wholly devoted to the pursuits of science. In the command, "love not the world," it is not intended that we should feel no interest in its concerns; that we should cease to admire its scenery; that we should forget the claims of kindred and affection;—for in all these respects religion allows what is lawful and proper;—but the interdict respects the sin of placing the world first, and God and his service secondary in our desires and affections. The requisition is, that we "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." We must cease from our idolatry. We must give to God his rightful dominion. When we love any object more than him, or when we prefer mere earthly pleasure to his service, *then* do we love the world, and "the love of the Father is not in us." Needs the Christian this exhortation? Alas, too often are we found looking back with secret longings after the world. The objects of sense still claim too much of our regard. O let us hear the voice of God, saying, "love not the world." "Set your affection on things above." Every affection we give to earth is a

ligature, in breaking which, death will give additional pain; but every affection we give to heaven, will be a pinion to bear the soul in triumph to its eternal rest.

Prayer.

And now, O Lord, we pray that thou wouldst give us the victory over the world, and the flesh, and the devil. These potent enemies can be overcome only by the power of that faith which is the gift of God. How often have we been brought into captivity to one or another of these adversaries! We have thought that our mountain stood strong. The world hath seemed at times to be a conquered enemy. But how little of ourselves have we known in supposing it had lost its power over us! O Lord, we have found our weakness, and have felt how inadequate are our strongest efforts to resist its influence. When it holdeth forth the prospect of its gains, or its pleasures, or its honors, our poor depraved hearts are kindled with excitement. Desires, which we had supposed slain, recur with terrific power. Lord, help us to overcome. Impart thy strength to our weakness. Give us such soul-enrapturing views of thyself, and such a relish for thy service, as shall make the world seem but vanity. Do we not still love thee, O our God; and can we not, amid all our wanderings, still say in sincerity, "whom have we in heaven but thee; and there is none upon the earth that we desire in comparison with thee?" Then let us love thee more and more. Let every idol be abandoned. O may we, by holy contemplation, converse so habitually with heavenly things, that we shall feel but "as strangers and pilgrims on the earth;" whilst we regard the heavenly state as the soul's happy home, upon which our most eager desires shall fix, and whither our feet shall travel with increasing zeal. Grant this, O Lord, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

MEDITATION XLVII.

HUMAN FRAILTY.

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. *Eccl.* 12: 7.

The body, then, is but finely organized dust. The eyes, so radiant with the light of mind—the hair, so finely spun, and of such uniform texture, are but dust; and are soon to be reunited with kindred dust. The whole frame-work of the body is to crumble at the touch of death. His cold hand is soon to be laid upon us, and then what a change will take place! The very lineaments of beauty are now turned into deformity. The eye, that most attractive organ, we are obliged to close, in order to shut from the view of survivors its fixed and inexpressive glare. There is a cold collapse of every feature, telling us that the ethereal inhabitant is gone. Even relatives will be constrained to take up the body and bury it out of their sight. Then it returns to its original elements. It is soon incorporated with and undistinguished from the cold clay that surrounds it. But where is the spirit? Has death, in invading the body, extinguished the soul? O no; "the spirit hath returned unto God who gave it." The last pulsation of the heart gave it liberty. If sanctified by the grace of God, it flew on angels' wings to the bosom of its Savior. Like the beautiful chrysalis, it burst from its fetters and expanded its wings in the sun-light of heaven, and drank the refreshing dews which sparkle around "the fountain of living waters." But if the soul shall go *unprepared;* if at death it shall be claimed by justice, and dragged to heaven's tribunal to an-

swer for a thousand sins unrepented of, unpardoned, O how fearful will be the transition! Let us then consider our latter end. Let us take a look at death as an event which we must personally meet; and let us ask ourselves, if we are at this moment prepared to go? Are we truly penitent? Have we by faith taken hold of Jesus, who "is the resurrection and the life?" Can we say, that "for us to live is Christ?" Are we "crucified to the world?" In one word, Are we living the life of the righteous? Let us answer these questions as we would, if this were our last hour, and eternity, with all its terrors and its transports, were in view.

Prayer.

O God, the decree which hath gone forth, consigning the body to the dust, is but the righteous retribution of sin. We recognize it as the mark of thy disapprobation towards our guilty race. Nor would we complain that we must pass the dark portals of death, inasmuch as we are among the chief of sinners. But O the thought of dying is terrific. Our soul shudders at the approach of the king of terrors. Deliver us, O God, from this bondage, to which hitherto we have been so subject. Take away these gloomy apprehensions, and extract "the sting of death which is sin." Let us be but cleansed from sin, and then we shall no more fear to die. Then, O Lord, shall we obtain the victory which through Christ is given to believers. "Where sin hath abounded, may thy grace much more abound." In these hearts, where sin hath reigned unto death, O may grace reign, through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Not only do we desire submission and resignation in view of the certainty and solemnity of death; but, we beseech thee, give us even "a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better." Help us to live the life of the righteous; and then when the hour of our departure shall come, may we "die the death of the righteous, and may our last end be like

his." O for the presence of our Savior, when we are called to "pass through the valley of the shadow of death!" Then may we "fear no evil." May our spirits, steadfast in hope, and "looking unto Jesus," lie sweetly resigned, and depart, if not in triumph, at least in holy tranquillity. And when the trumpet shall sound, may our sleeping dust come forth in the image of the Savior, and reunited with the happy soul, be forever with the Lord. Amen.

MEDITATION XLVIII.

THE CONSUMMATION—SACRAMENTAL.

It is finished. *John* 19: 30.

Thus exclaimed the dying Savior, and immediately he gave up the ghost. In these words we have the consummating act of the great work of redemption. "The cup which the Father had given," was now drank even to the dregs. Henceforth sufferings were to be exchanged for joy, and ignominy for glory and honor. From that body, quivering in death, the spirit passed in triumph to Paradise. There is no more suffering now. "It is finished." From the moment of his appearance in the world, until the moment of his departure, it was little else than a continued scene of trial. He was indeed "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." But even our *Redeemer's* sufferings had an end. The prospect grew darker and darker. It deepened at every step, until his soul lay buried in anguish at Gethsemane, and was wrapt in more than midnight gloom on Calvary. *There* even the Father's face was hid. "My God, my God, why hast *thou* forsaken me?" But hark!

he exclaims, "It is finished." The death pang is felt, and his last words assure us of the final triumph. O my Redeemer, was all this endured for me? Could nothing less than thy life-blood answer the demands of a violated law, and secure for me the mercy of Heaven? Could nothing less "finish transgression, make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness?" Then let me fall at thy feet, *meaning* the gratitude which I cannot express. For such love, I would give myself and all I have, to be thine; and to be employed for thee forever. "Let sin no more reign in my mortal body." Let me take a view of its turpitude from the blood-stained cross; and when the table is spread, whereon the emblems of thy dying love are laid, let me go and commemorate that love, and renew my vows to be thine forever.

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

Prayer.

"Thanks be unto thee, O God, for thy unspeakable gift." Thou wast "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;" but foreseeing that all *must* perish, unless an infinite sacrifice were made, thou didst "give thy only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should have everlasting life." From the bosom of the Father—from the bliss of heaven—he came to bleed and die for us, lost sinners. One with the Father, he was willing to become one with us, that through "the incarnate mystery," we might become reunited to the Father. Precious Savior! What language can properly express thy condescension and compassion! What requital can we make thee for thy labors and thy dying love! Thou didst "finish the work which

was given thee to do." Wondrous work! It was no less than to raise our ruined nature from the fall—to pay to violated law a full equivalent—to satisfy divine justice—to open the gate of mercy to mankind—to secure the soul's purification as well as its pardon—to disappoint the powers of hell, and to fill all heaven with new raptures. Wondrous work indeed! Who but thyself could have undertaken and finished it! Thy dying breath hath pronounced it finished. Glorious consummation! O let us partake of the benefits of so dear a purchase! Nothing can be added to this finished salvation, nor can any thing be taken away. Blessed be thy name, no merits of ours are needed. We come, then, naked, poor, and wretched. O that we might have faith to receive this finished salvation, and hearts to give thee all the glory. Amen.

MEDITATION XLIX.

THE COMFORTED—AFFLICTION.

The Master is come, and calleth for thee. *John* 11: 28.

Precious intelligence! How must the heart of the pious Mary have been soothed, when she was informed that her Lord had come to administer the cup of consolation! What hand but his could wipe away her tears and speak peace to her troubled spirit? Himself "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," he could enter with deepest sympathy into her afflictions. It was for this object, among others, that he came as a sojourner in this "vale of tears." It was to "bear our griefs and to carry our sorrows." Behold him approaching the hospitable mansion at Bethany! There he had found a shelter from this friendless world.

There he had experienced the assiduities of sincere and devoted friendship. But now Lazarus whom he loved sleeps in death. The heart-broken sisters are mourning that their Lord had not been with them to stay the malady and save their brother. But hark; the well-known foot-step is heard. "The Master is come." But "O," exclaim the weeping sisters, "he has come too late." The declaration implies too little faith. Jesus has *not* come too late. His voice can raise the dead. "Dry up your tears," says the compassionate Master, "only believe; your brother shall rise again." This cheering word the pious Martha bears to her weeping sister; and instantly she goes from the place of sorrow to the place of sweetest consolation—to Jesus' feet. Let the mourner imitate the conduct of Mary. Be thy grief never so great, listen to the call of Jesus. He invites you to come and cast your burden upon him. Mourner, sit not down in hopeless sorrow. There is one who can enter into thy troubles. He drank a far more bitter cup; and can enable you to drink *your* cup with holy submission. Although you cannot now expect a miraculous interposition—though death will not be called upon to deliver back the loved one; still Jesus will come—if you will but invite him—and pour into your soul the balm of heavenly consolation. Let every child of affliction listen to the gracious invitation, "the Master is come, and calleth for thee."

Prayer.

To whom shall we go, in the hour of affliction, but to thee, O Redeemer, who wast thyself "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief?" The sufferings of soul and body incident to our nature—saving that of sin—thou didst endure, that we might find in thee a sympathizing friend as well as

an almighty Savior. "Thou wast tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." Grant, then, that we may hear thy voice inviting us as thou didst weeping Mary to come to thee, and to cast our sorrows at thy feet. If left to sustain the burden alone, Lord, we shall sink ; for it is heavier than our feeble spirits can endure. How weak are the powers of nature even when no afflictions press upon us! But when the stroke actually falls, how do we faint without thine all-supporting arm! It is in vain, O Lord, that we look for consolation from the world ; or even from the dear friends who feel for us. Their sympathy cannot reach the deep fountains of grief. The wound is too severe to be stanched by any but a hand divine. O, it is only that dear hand which was pierced, and that heart which burst in agony on the cross, which can effectually soothe or heal the broken heart. We bring our burdens, Lord, to thee. We acknowledge the rectitude of thy dealings, and in our heaviest trials, we bow to the justice which imposeth them. We deserve it all—yea, ten thousand times more than we suffer. Still may we come and crave that grace which can help us to bear the load, and which can sanctify the dispensation to the good of our souls. O let the rebukes of thy providence lead us to repentance ; let us be weaned thereby from the world ; and through this and other tribulations let us enter at last into the kingdom of God. Amen.

MEDITATION L.

DEPRECATION.

And lead us not into temptation. *Matt.* 6: 13.

Daily, yea almost hourly should this prayer arise ; since there is scarcely a place or a moment, in which we are not exposed to the influence of the tempter. The body with its impulses is in close contact with the soul. How does it plead for indulgence! Every sense is an inlet to temptation. The eye is roving after the forbidden object. The appetite is clamorous for dainties, or pushes us beyond the bounds of strict temperance. The very touch will sometimes sting the soul. Around us on every hand are seductive influences, by which Satan manages to rouse into action the wrong desires. Here the cup of sensual pleasure is presented—there the golden idol—and there again, in distant but attractive glory, rises the temple of fame. Go where we will, the enemy is in our path. If we muse in solitude, the imagination will tempt us away to scenes of folly and of sin. If we mingle in the social circle, flattery, and pride, and vanity, and sensual emotions will sometimes be provoked. If we engage in traffic, O how difficult to keep " a conscience void of offence towards God and men !" If we perform even a religious exercise, the tempter will be near to promote hypocrisy or self-complacency. Where can we flee to hide ourselves from his power? He followed our Master even into the solitary wilderness; and shall *we* hope to escape ? But Jesus has put into our mouths a prayer of defence. " Lead us not into temptation." Sensible of our exposure and weakness, let this pe-

tition dwell on our lips. If offered in sincerity—if we truly hate sin, and wish to avoid its contamination even in thought, there cannot be a more suitable prayer than this; nor will it be offered in vain. He who taught it us, well knows our liability to sin; and having been himself exposed to Satan's attacks, he will not fail to succor those who call upon him.

Prayer.

Blessed Savior, who hast taught us to pray, "lead us not into temptation;" to thee may we flee in every dark distressful hour, and find thee "a refuge, a very present help in trouble." Even in our best frames, we feel, O Lord, how weak is our strength, how faint are our hopes of perseverance! No arm, we are confident, but *thine* can hold us up, and bear us forward in the path of duty. But ah, how soon is our sky overcast! One hour finds us rejoicing; and the next sees us covered with confusion and overwhelmed with apprehension. Satan is at hand watching for opportunities to ply his darts, and scarce an hour passeth in which there is not an opening for his attacks. The body is one source of temptation. O Lord, enable us "to keep it under, and to bring it into subjection." Enable us "to crucify the flesh, with its affections and its lusts." But what power, O Lord, could the body have, if the *heart* were not wrong? Alas; here is the fountain of evil. "Create in us a clean heart," and all will be safe. Since, blessed Savior, thou wast thyself tempted, and knowest the wiles of the adversary, O be thou our strength and our shield. Help us to say to every evil suggestion, "get thee behind me Satan." Help us to contend against worldly allurements; and clothed in the panoply of the gospel, may we be able, through thy strength, to overcome all our spiritual enemies, and we will ascribe the victory and the glory to thy name alone. Amen.

MEDITATION LI.

ENCOURAGEMENT.

This man receiveth sinners. *Luke* 15: 2.

Though spoken by an enemy of Jesus, these words are a precious testimony to his condescending love and mercy. "I came," says he, "not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Blessed truth! Were it not for this, how many a poor soul would go weeping to the grave! The heart deeply smitten with a sense of its sins—feeling almost as if there *could* be no mercy for one so vile—has caught at these encouraging words, and ventured to make application to Jesus. "He receiveth sinners." This has inspired confidence in the soul, even when conscience has been so loud in her reproofs as almost to overwhelm the mind with despair. Why need any keep back from the gracious Savior on the ground of their unworthiness? This is the very ground assumed, on which Jesus will welcome them. It is not the righteous, not the worthy, whom he calls, and whom he receives. O no; it is "the poor in spirit," those who feel themselves "the chief of sinners." It is the Mary Magdalenes, the publicans with broken hearts and weeping eyes, whom Jesus receives. Said he not to one who wept over her sins, "daughter, thy sins are forgiven thee?" Said he not to another, "this day must I abide in thy house?" And to another, "O woman, great is thy faith?" Let nothing, then, hinder us from fleeing at once to this gracious deliverer. Are our sins many and aggravated? Do they seem of mountain-magnitude? Who but Jesus can take them away? What but his blood can wash out the crimson

stain? Venture then to go, and lay thy polluted soul at his feet. "*He* receiveth sinners." This is enough even for the vilest. On this assurance we may go to him; we may cast our burden on his arm, and commit our souls into his hands, not doubting that "his blood cleanseth us from all sin."

Prayer.

Blessed Jesus, hadst thou not uttered words of encouragement even for the vilest who mourneth for sin, we had not dared to make application to thee for mercy; for not only are we sinners, in common with others, but O, there seemeth to be in *our* case a deeper criminality, from circumstances which thou only canst know and appreciate. What the guilt of others may be we know not; but fixing our eyes upon our own case, it seemeth as if none could have sinned in a manner so vile, so ungrateful. We know it would be depreciating the merits of thy blood, to assert that it could not reach and cleanse even our guilt; nor would we dare to indulge the thought; but at times, something will suggest the impossibility of our finding mercy even at thy hands. O rid us of this unbelief! Let the assurance that "thou receivest sinners," comfort and encourage us. Reveal to our faith thy sufficiency; and enable us to cast our sin-sick, sin-burdened souls at thy feet. Let the examples on record of thy willingness to receive even the chief of sinners, urge us to fly without delay to thy mercy. Yes, we will come, even now, with all our inward burdens. Receive us, O Lord, and speak to *us*, as thou didst to weeping Mary. Say to us, "your sins, which are many, are forgiven." Those words of mercy shall fill our souls "with joy unspeakable." Since thou "receivest sinners," O receive us, who are among "the chief of sinners."

MEDITATION LII.

THE SOLEMN QUESTION—NEW YEAR.

For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away. *James* 4: 14.

What is more fleeting than a vapor? We have scarcely time to notice it, ere it is gone. The mist that lies on the mountain-side, born in a night, receives the sun-beam of morning and fades away from our vision. And is such the life of man? Truly the pen of inspiration has drawn a vivid picture of our vain life. Nor is this the only passage of inspired truth which speaks the same idea. "Man," says the Psalmist, "at his best state, is altogether vanity." "Surely every man walketh in a vain show." And again, "he cometh forth like a flower and is cut down: in the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth." Time past is as though it were not. As to the time to come, we know not whether another year will find us in the land of the living. How many during the past year—some of whom were known to us, and, it may be, *loved*, dearly loved, by us—have gone to the chambers of death! Their race is run. They are no longer objects of interest to any but to those who loved them. The unthinking world tread carelessly over their graves. O what supreme vanity are the projects of the ambitious and the covetous! What object is worthy of our pursuit, save the discharge of duty, and preparation for eternity! Let us be deeply impressed with the shortness of time, and with the importance of "working while it is day."

Look back, my soul, and see how time has fled unimproved —nay, worse, even murdered, in indolence and in sensual indulgence. O the past! Painful is the review of life's scenes. But let me "redeem the time," seeing that "the days are evil." Let me save, out of a lost existence, some fragments, which shall tell of good accomplished by the grace of God—which shall serve to light up my otherwise gloomy pilgrimage.

Prayer.

In view of our frailty and our sin, we may well exclaim, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him!" We are of yesterday, and to-morrow we die. What goodness and forbearance hast thou shown, in sparing us to the present hour! How many sins and provocations have marked our course from childhood onward; and what hardness of heart have we evinced under the various dispensations of thy providence! Truly "thou hast not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." Hadst thou cut us down long since, and consigned our bodies to the tomb, it would have been but a righteous expression of thy displeasure against us; nay, hadst thou cast our souls into hell, it would have been a retribution which the holy universe must have approved. How have we abused the powers given us to glorify God! How have we wasted our time, extended to us that we might repent and turn to thee! How have we slighted the day and the means of grace, conferred on *us*, but withheld from millions! We bow in deepest shame before thee, thou offended, yet long-suffering Jehovah. O let us now receive forgiveness and grace. Help us to redeem time which has been lost and abused to purposes of evil. May we devote what remains to thy service, and to preparation for eternity. Blot out, O God, from thy book, all the past. Let the precious blood of the Lamb cancel the dark account. Let thy Holy Spirit strengthen us to commence anew our journey, and to "run with patience the race that

is set before us." Whether our days be few or many, O may they all be spent in thy service; and when they shall close, let our spirits cheerfully bid adieu to earth, in the sweet and comforting assurance of future felicity through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

END.

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